DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 613 FL 801 421

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | The Changes Project: Understanding the Impact of Welfare Reform, Immigration Reform and the Changing Nature of Work on Adult Learners in Western Massachusetts. |
| INSTITUTION | Holyoke Community Coll., MA. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | 2000-00-00 |
| NOTE | 240p.; "Significant assistance with report preparation was provided by Amy Dryansky and David Wicks." |
| CONTRACT | R309F70045 |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Evaluative (142) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC10 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Action Research; *Adult Education; *Adult Literacy; English (Second Language); Federal Legislation; *Immigrants; Interviews; *Literacy Education; Participant Observation; *Participatory Research; Program Descriptions; Questionnaires; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning |

ABSTRACT

The document describes the Changes Project, a participatory action research project conducted by adult learners at five adult literacy and education programs in Western Massachusetts. It is a 3-year project aimed at examining the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace on adult learners. The Changes Project is significant for four reasons: (1) through the use of participatory action research, it brings knowledge of adult learners into the national conversation about welfare and immigration reforms and the changing workplace; (2) by developing a model for understanding the complexity of the lives of adult learners affected by these issues, it broadens the discussion of the impact of these three issues; (3) the report describes the ways in which adult learners are resilient and proactive in the face of often difficult and challenging circumstances posed by these reforms and changes; and (4) the report can serve as a guide for learners and practitioners to learn and teach about issues of importance in their own lives and communities, and find ways to shape policies that affect them. It is concluded that such reforms and changes have made life more difficult for these adult learners, because detailed and intelligible information about the reforms can be hard to come by, work requirements make it harder to stay in school, and good jobs with promotion potential and benefits are increasingly difficult to get without sufficient skills and the English language skills that come with more schooling. Recommendations are made for learners, the educational community, employers, and legislators; the methodology is fully explained; and five appendices on site sections, references, survey instruments, a Mother's Day letter project, and theater pieces are included. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (Contains 42 references.) (KFT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 448 613

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Understanding the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work on adult learners in Western Massachusetts

# The Changes Project

FL 801 421

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

*A collaborative study by Holyoke Community College's Western Regional Resource Center of the System for Adult Basic Education Support, the Mentor Program at Holyoke Community College, the Center for New Americans, the International Language Institute of Massachusetts, the Read/Write/Now Adult and Family Learning Center of the Springfield Libraries and Museum and the University of Massachusetts/Amherst's Labor/Management Workplace Education Program*

Holyoke Community College is the fiscal agent for this research project, which is funded by the Field-Initiated Studies Grant Program, Award #R309F70045, as administered by the Office for Educational Research and Improvement, the National Institute of Post-Secondary Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning, U.S. Department of Education.

The contents of this report do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute of Post Secondary Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning; the Office of Educational Research and Improvement; the U.S. Department of Education; or any of the participating agencies, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

# Table of Contents


Executive Summary . . . . . 1

Introduction
- Our Question and Our Focus . . . . . 5
- Who We Are . . . . . 7
- How the Changes Team Worked . . . . . 13
- Who We Talked With . . . . . 16

What We Found
- The Impact of the Changes Project on Researchers . . . . . 18
- Understanding the Context of Learners' Lives . . . . . 27
  - The Web of Support . . . . . 29
  - The Need for Responsive Supports . . . . . 40
  - Getting and Giving Support to Others & Its Connection to Independence . . 44
  - Interdependence and Independence . . . . . 45
- The Impact of Welfare Reform . . . . . 47
  - The Context . . . . . 47
  - Welfare Reform Findings . . . . . 53
- The Impact of Immigration Reform . . . . . 64
  - The Context . . . . . 64
  - Immigration Reform Findings . . . . . 68
- The Impact of the Changing Workplace . . . . . 79
  - The Context . . . . . 79
  - Workplace Findings . . . . . 84

Recommendations From The Changes Project
- Recommendations for Adult Basic Education, Workplace Education and Community College Educators and Program Administrators . . . . . 111
- Recommendations for Learners . . . . . 114
- Recommendations for Workplaces . . . . . 115
- Recommendations for Legislators and Policy Makers . . . . . 117

How We Did Our Work
- Philosophy . . . . . 119
- Assumptions and Beliefs . . . . . 119
- Continued Reflections on Our Assumptions and Beliefs . . . . . 122
- Conducting the Research . . . . . 124
- The Research Process . . . . . 127
- Soundness of the Study . . . . . 147
- Significance and Limitations . . . . . 148

Where To Go From Here . . . . . 151

Appendix
- Site Sections . . . . . 153
- References . . . . . 170
- Instruments . . . . . 173
- Mother's Day Letter . . . . . 227
- Theater Pieces . . . . . 231

# Welcome

The Changes Project is a participatory action research project conducted by adult learners at five adult literacy and education programs in Western Massachusetts. This report is for you – learner, teacher, funder, researcher – everyone who cares about what's happening in adult literacy and education. This report is also for us, the creators of this project, because after three years of intense, challenging, difficult and rewarding work, we want to share what we've learned about the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work on adult learners. We hope you will take what we know, borrow and steal from it, make copies and hand them out, use them in your classroom in order to move forward with your own work.

Telling our story – orally and in writing – at the many conference presentations we've done, it was apparent that the whole of the story is essential for the full meaning of the parts to be clear. So, you hold in your hands the whole. You also hold the parts and we've crafted a document that we think will allow you to find your way to your own understanding of the research we've done. Use the Table of Contents to dig into our story first in the place that you are most curious about. Allow your experience there and the questions that arise to guide where you go next. We've captured the whole, but we invite you to make your own path through it.

As you read, keep in mind that this project was shaped by the people for whom these issues have the greatest resonance; they are also at the greatest risk from the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work. We want to thank them, and everyone else who made this project possible:


**Center for New Americans**

Carolyn Cushing,
*Site Research Facilitator*
Bussarakum Humphrey
Janet Jimenez
Ivonne Rivera

**International Language Institute of Massachusetts**

Blanca Dominguez
Jenny Genge-Perez
Yoon Joo Lee
Ileana Pino
Renata Watson,
*Site Research Facilitator*

**Mentor Program**

Ivelisse Bonafont
Virgen Claudio
Betty Falcón
Cynthia McBride
Crystal Quiles
Krystal Recor
Alicia Roberts
María Santana
Ann Scott,
*Site Research Facilitator*
Rhonda Soto

**Read/Write/Now Adult and Family Learning Center**

Yong Anderson

Miguel Cruzado

Karen Gladden

Les Graham

Lou Leduc

Sarah Lockett

Joan Moultrie

Karen Rivera

Sherry Russell,
*Site Research Facilitator*

Bob Wakem

**University of Massachusetts/ Amherst's Labor/Management Workplace Education Program**

Ramona Balicki

Peter Baumann

Lee Christian

Bill Coleman

Leslie Fraser,
*Site Research Facilitator*

Eugenie Harvey

Linda Hillenbrand

Ken Kushi

Frank Olbris

Richard Plowucha

Sandy Stiles

Ted Tabaka

Linda Wallack

Lynn Zlotnick

**Western Regional Support Center of the System for Adult Basic Education Support at Holyoke Community College**

Alexandra C. Risley Schroeder,
*Project Coodinator*

**Research Advisory Group**

Judy Hofer,
*World Education*

Joseph Connolly,
*University of Massachusetts/Amherst*

Daria Fisk,
*University of Massachusetts/Amherst*

**Methodological Consultant**

Gretchen Rossman
*School of Education,*
*University of Massachusetts/Amherst*

**Evaluator**

Rose Sackey-Milligan

Significant assistance with report preparation was provided by Amy Dryansky and David Wicks.

**Terms and abbreviations that you will encounter throughout this report:**

ABE – Adult Basic Education

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

GED – General Equivalency Diploma

SRF – site research facilitators (See below for explanation.)

Participant – We use this to refer to those learners we spoke with in interviews, focus groups, heard from in writing workshops and those who responded to surveys.

Researcher – We use this to refer to any member of the five research teams. We use this interchangeably with "team member".

Team member – This also refers to any member of the five research teams. We use this interchangeably with "researcher".

Site research facilitator – This term refers to any one of the five half-time staff who were members of a research team and who worked with the other researchers on the team.

Refugee – Those who are allowed to enter the U.S. because they are unable or unwilling to return to their country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on such factors as race, religion, or political opinion.

Immigrant – People from another country who are admitted by the U.S. government, and allowed to live in the U.S. as Legal Permanent Residents and who can, after three to five years, apply for citizenship.

Undocumented – Those living in the U.S. without permission of the U.S. government.

Newcomer – A term we use to refer to those who are new to the U.S. In our usage, it includes refugees, immigrants, migrants, Puerto Rican born U.S. citizens and those who are undocumented.

Workers – This refers to those individuals we spoke with regarding the changing workplace who were working when we spoke with them.

Job seekers – This refers to those individuals we spoke with or heard from regarding the changing workplace who were looking for work when we spoke with them.

**Participating Program abbreviations**

CNA – Center for New Americans

RWN – Read/Write/Now Adult and Family Learning Center

MP – Mentor Program

UM/LMWEP – University of Massachusetts/Amherst Labor/Management Workplace Education Program (sometimes abbreviated as LMWEP)

ILI – International Language Institute of Massachusetts

SABES West – the Western Regional Support Center of the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support located at Holyoke Community College

HCC – Holyoke Community College

# Executive Summary

The Changes Project is a three-year research project examining the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing workplace on adult learners. This regional study is a collaboration between Holyoke Community College's Western Regional Support Center of the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support and five adult literacy and education programs in Western Massachusetts. Our work paints a unique picture of the impact of these issues on adult learners at these literacy and education programs:

- Center for New Americans
- International Language Institute of Massachusetts
- Mentor Program at Holyoke Community College
- Read/Write/Now Adult and Family Learning Center of the Springfield Library and Museums
- University of Massachusetts at Amherst's Labor/Management Workplace Education Program

**The Changes Project is significant for four reasons:**

***Through the use of participatory action research it brings the knowledge of adult learners into the national conversation about welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work.***

National conversations about welfare reform, immigration issues and the way work is changing rarely include the voices of those most directly affected by these changes. This report brings the insight and experience of 620 adult learners into focus, including current and former welfare recipients, refugees, immigrants and migrants, workers and displaced workers ranging in age from 18 – 82 years. With clear and strong voices, these learners describe the impact they experience and offer recommendations to shape education and social policy.

***By developing a model for understanding the complexity of the lives of adult learners affected by the issues, it broadens the discussion of the impact of these three issues.***

Through this project, we've developed a conceptual model of a "web of support" to illustrate the ways adult learners bring together the diverse resources available to them to pursue their education and life goals. This network includes practical supports, inner resources, personal supports and institutional supports. We saw that we could not understand how these three issues affect learners without also examining the complex networks of support in which individuals pursue their education and life goals.

Those who shape policies and classroom practice must understand how their actions affect the strands within an individual's web – how policies and practices intersect with, reshape, add to or eliminate a learner's supports. "One-size-fits-all" policies do not fit because learners are not all one size – they have different contexts, needs, strengths and supports that make up their web, the unique landscapes of their lives.

***The report describes the ways in which adult learners are resilient and proactive in the face of often difficult and challenging circumstances; this in turn helps dispel misconceptions about these adults and their peers.***

Most striking to us, the webs of support revealed in the Changes Project contain strands that are not about having, getting or receiving support from an individual or institution, but about giving support to others. Giving support helps to strengthen the recipient's web but can also strengthen the giver's.

Most of the people we talked to spoke of their desire to be independent so that they can provide for, care for and inspire themselves and others. They were working hard to achieve this through a combination of their own efforts as learners and workers and by making use of supports available to them from public assistance, immigration agencies, their workplaces, families, and communities.

This determination and resiliency is evident in the face of the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work.

**The Impact of Welfare Reform**

The specific policies learners talk about most – those that have the greatest impact – are the two-year time limit on benefits; the work requirement, which requires people with school-aged children to perform either volunteer or paid work for twenty hours a week; and the Family Cap Law, which denies welfare benefits to any children born after the two-year time limit has been applied to their parent's case.

The majority of the adult learners we talked to say welfare reform makes it difficult for them to remain in school. Many learners report missing classes and dropping out of school in order to comply with welfare regulations. Without more schooling, many learners on welfare will struggle desperately to support themselves and their families once their benefits end. To make matters worse, learners report that impor-

tant information about welfare policy and regulations is often unavailable, not known to the caseworker, or not made available to recipients who need English language translation or who lack the ability to read and write.

The resilience of many of those we heard from has been greatly challenged by welfare reform. Despite this, people continue to find ways to strive toward their goals, care for their families, and keep their dreams of a better future alive.

**The Impact of Immigration Reform**

Our findings indicate that immigrants and other newcomers are confused about or unaware of how the changing immigration laws and regulations affect them. As with welfare, accurate and accessible information is difficult to get about changing visa status, applying for a Green Card or becoming a U.S. citizen. In addition, immigrants are confused about the public benefits they are legally eligible to receive and concerned about how receiving benefits will impact their immigration status. Some students have incorrect information, others wrongly believe that they are completely ineligible for public benefits.

The immigrants and refugees told us how important they believe education is to getting a better future. They also told us about some of the barriers they face in pursuing an education, many of which are related to their immigration status. It is clear that immigrants and refugees need support to learn English and to understand how various U.S. systems, like health care, education, employment and immigration, work.

**The Impact of the Changing Workplace**

Our findings on the impact of the changing nature of work describe the tensions between jobs and education and the impact of technology. They present a picture of how workers view their treatment in the workplace as well as the desire for change engendered by these experiences. They also detail personal and institutional barriers that workers face both as they enter the workplace and as they seek to advance in the workplace.

While work is in some instances changing for some of those we heard from, for others it remains the same. Nonetheless, in both these groups respect is a dominant theme in the data, and what is abundantly clear is the desire to seek jobs or move into jobs that offer more respect, pay, or a different kind of challenge.

***The Changes Project can serve as a guide for learners and practitioners to learn and teach about issues of importance in their lives and their communities, and find ways to shape policies that affect them.***

The Changes Project report is for you – learner, teacher, funder, researcher – everyone who cares about what's happening in adult literacy and education. We invite you to read the full report, and as you do, keep in mind that this project was shaped by the people for whom these issues have the greatest resonance; they are also at the greatest risk from the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work.

The experience and expertise of those learners serves as a basis for further discussion about the ways in which social policies and trends intersect with adult learners' achievement of their education goals. Our findings and recommendations bring focus to areas of challenge for learners, educators and policy makers and highlight avenues for reshaping policy and practice.

The Changes Project is a three-year research project on the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing workplace on adult learners. Fourteen adult literacy programs in Western Massachusetts identified the purpose and focus of the study. These programs came together to determine the most critical research question for adult learners in literacy and education programs across the region. While not all of the programs went on to take an active role in this study, it is considered a regional effort by both the participating and non-participating programs.

## *Our Question and Our Focus*

As adult learners, literacy practitioners and researchers, the question has never been whether or not welfare reform, immigration reform, or the changing workplace have an impact on adult learners; we see it everyday. Our work has been to determine what the impact is – to paint as complete a picture as possible of the impact. The more we know about that impact the better able we will be to ensure that the usefulness and quality of the educational services we provide is as high as it can be. A clear picture will enable us to help shape and craft policies and programs that support adults to achieve their educational goals.

In the course of this project, we set out to learn more about:

- Effects of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing requirements of the workplace on adult learners at five adult literacy programs in Western Massachusetts.
- Ways in which adult learners respond to and accommodate immigration reform, welfare reform and the changing requirements of the workplace as they pursue their goals through education.
- How practitioners and programs can alter educational services to be more effective given welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing requirements of the workplace.
- Ways in which policies can be more responsive to the needs of adult learners as they deal with these three issues.

At the close of one of the Mentor Project's focus groups, participants were asked if they had any final comments. One woman, a community college student, welfare recipient, and single parent had this to say: "We want someone out there to read our words. Get [our words] out there. Give [them] to the government!"

**Purpose of Research**

Welfare reform, new immigrant legislation, and the changing workplace are among the most critical issues facing adult learners who wish to acquire basic literacy skills, attain their GED, enroll in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class or upgrade their skills in the workplace. It is important for us, as educators and those who work closely with adult learners, to understand the impact of these issues on adult learners as they pursue their

educational goals. The more we know about impact the better able we will be to ensure that the usefulness and quality of the educational services available is as high as it can be and that policies and programs support adults working to achieve their educational goals.

**Background on the Need for Adult Basic Education**

The need for adult basic education is both great and inadequately met across the nation and in our region. We know from the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), funded by the United States Department of Education, that lacking education has wide and severe ramifications. Specifically, the survey found that:

The learners we talked with – newcomers, current and former welfare recipients and workers – told us over and over again how important school was to their ability to gain the specific skills and information they need to manage their lives and to feel less dependent on others.

- More than 20% of adults read at or below a fifth grade level – far below the level needed to earn a living wage. Adults with low literacy skills earn the least, and of those adults receiving welfare, almost 50% do not have a high school diploma or a GED. Forty-three percent of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty and 70% have no job or a part-time job.
- Nearly 32 million people in the United States speak languages other than English, and programs that serve them are full, with waiting lists of several months to several years.
- Because the literacy levels of children are strongly linked to the educational achievement of their parents, especially their mothers, children of parents who are undereducated and unemployed are five times more likely to drop out of school than children of employed parents.
- In the workplace, over 60% of front-line workers in the goods-producing industry cannot match information in a text to the required task if any inference is involved and cannot integrate information from several sources.

In Western Massachusetts, the need for adult education services is in line with the need the NALS outlined for the nation. According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Long Range Program (1991-1996), there are 1.3 million adults in Massachusetts without a high school diploma, and 600,000 whose literacy levels are below a fifth grade level. In particular, the immigrant and non-English speaking population is growing at a faster rate in New England than in other regions of the country. It is estimated that in 1990, 75% of all jobs in Massachusetts required at least a high school education, and by 2000, a 12th grade education will be required for most entry-level work. Despite the need for educational services, the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education has found that existing programs serve only three-and-a-half percent of adults needing literacy and adult education programs.

**Purposes Adults Identify for Pursuing Adult Basic Education**

In 1993, the National Institute for Literacy released *Equipped for the Future: A Customer-Driven Vision for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning*. EFF, as it is more commonly known, delineates what was heard from more than 1500 adult learners from programs across the country. Those adults voiced their "purposes" in pursuing education, which as EFF notes, are purposes not about context- or time-specific accomplishments, but "fundamental [purposes] that express the social and cultural meaning or significance of the accomplishments for individuals engaged in defining themselves as competent actors in the world." These purposes are:

- Literacy for access and orientation
- Literacy as voice
- Literacy for independent action
- Literacy as a bridge to the future

These are the reasons adult learners engage in educational activities. If education is the way that adults are able to locate themselves, be heard, take action and build a future, it is important that we understand the way policies and social currents impact the pursuit and attainment of these educational goals and purposes.

> "I came back to school because I want to know how to read better and because I want to know myself better."
>
> *A literacy learner*

## *Who We Are*

This regional study was a collaboration between Holyoke Community College's Western Regional Support Center of the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES West) and five adult literacy and education programs: the Center for New Americans, the International Language Institute of Massachusetts, the Mentor Program at Holyoke Community College, the Read/Write/Now Adult and Family Learning Center of the Springfield Library and Museums and the University of Massachusetts/Amherst's Labor/Management Workplace Education Program.

**Research Teams**

There were five research teams, one per partner program. The project coordinator worked out of the SABES West office. Each team was comprised of adult learners from that program and a half-time Site Research Facilitator (SRF). Site Research Facilitators both facilitated teams and were members. Teams ranged in size from 3 to 14. Teams worked independently of one another, coming together three times to conduct analysis across the three issues. Two teams researching the same issue(s) came together periodically. Teams also came together to do seven presentations, five of them at national and state conferences, and for celebrations.

Looking across the five teams, the following list describes the core group of 34 researchers who engaged in this project: we are whom we studied. (Eight other learners participated as researchers but were unable to sustain their commitment due to intervening factors which included getting a job, personal issues, illness, needing to leave the program due to reaching the welfare time limit, being too overwhelmed by the requirements of welfare reform, continuing schooling at another institution, and changing job requirements.)

Our education levels:

- Two of us were literacy learners.
- Thirty-two of us had high school diplomas.
- Nine of us were ESOL learners.
- Twenty-two of us were enrolled in higher education, or possessed college degree.

Our connections to the issues:

- Ten of us were current or former welfare recipients.
- Four of us were newcomers to the U.S. and four of us were newcomers to the U.S. mainland, originally from Puerto Rico.
- We came from the following countries: Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Korea, Thailand, and the United States.
- Thirty-two of us were employed (14 at UM/Amherst and 18 at other workplaces).
- Eight of us were union members.
- Seven of us were either current or former union stewards and one of us is a former union president.
- We held the following jobs in addition to our work as researchers: restaurant worker, teaching assistant, teacher, mentor, childcare worker, human service worker, office worker, custodian, mail clerk, nutrition educators, carpenter, and HVAC tradesworker.

Our other characteristics:

- Twenty-six of us were parents. Of these at least ten were single parents.
- Among us we spoke the following languages: English, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Thai.
- Seventeen of us spoke more than one language.
- We included the following ethnicities: African American, Hispanic/Latin American, European American and Asian.
- We ranged in age from 22 to 55.
- Twenty-seven of us were women, seven were men.

Throughout the report there are "Meet A Researcher" sidebars that provide a more personal glimpse at who we are as individuals.

## Changes Project Partner Programs

The five adult literacy and education programs that served as research sites serve a diversity of adult learners. In addition, the collaboration engaged a wide range of program types: library literacy, community-based agency, community college and workplace; and program service types: ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), ABE (Adult Basic Education), GED preparation, transition to college, and workplace education. To a large degree the study also represents the diversity of the Western Massachusetts region that these programs serve, which includes rural, suburban and urban settings. The broad spectrum of programs, participants, and settings represented in this collaboration provides a strong base from which to generate recommendations and will strengthen the usefulness of the study findings to other programs and settings.

### SABES West

The Western Regional Support Center of the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support (also known as SABES West) at Holyoke Community College, in existence for more than 10 years, is one of the five regional support centers for the nationally recognized Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES). SABES is a program of the Massachusetts Department of Education that consists of World Education and five community colleges, including Holyoke Community College. SABES West provides staff and program development and technical assistance to the more than 60 adult literacy programs in the four counties of Western Massachusetts. SABES West programming includes long- and short-term staff and program development activities such as workshops, mini-courses, study circles, teacher research, conferences, symposiums, curriculum development, and collaboration building among providers in the region, in such areas as research, assessment, technology, health, family literacy, employability. Annually, more than 150 teachers participate in SABES West activities, and through their work more than 2,000 adult learners are also reached. SABES West is a member of the New England Literacy Resource Center, a coalition of New England state adult literacy resource centers. SABES West also works with the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Educators and is connected with the Massachusetts-based National Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Learning.

### Center for New Americans

The Center for New Americans (CNA), a community-based, non-profit adult education center, provides the immigrant, refugee, and migrant communities of the Pioneer Valley with the education and resources to learn English, become involved members of their new communities, and ultimately obtain the tools necessary to secure economic independence and stability. CNA has grown from a tiny program, which served 15 Tibetan learners in 1992, to a multi-site, community-based organization, which served over 400 people from 30

countries in fiscal year 1999. These newcomers were served through CNA's five programs which include: 1) English for Speakers of Other Languages classes at the Beginning and Intermediate Level, 2) The Community Computer Lab offering basic computer instruction at CNA's three sites, 3) A Citizenship Assistance Program which assists low-income immigrants to obtain citizenship, 4) An Action Research Program in which learners investigate problems confronting newcomers to this country and take action to solve these problems, and 5) Volunteer Tutor Program to connect native speakers with CNA learners and work toward meeting individual goals.

These programs are offered at CNA's three sites in Amherst, Greenfield, and Northampton. Eighty-five percent of learners are immigrants or refugees from other countries. Twelve percent are Puerto Rican born U.S. citizens, 62% are women, and 38% are men. Additionally, 84% of CNA learners have incomes that fall into the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's categories of Very Low or Low Income.

The range of learners' country of origin varies year to year. The refugee population in particular varies depending on the ethnic groups being re-settled by local refugee assistance organizations. The following 1998 statistics provide a snapshot of the organization during the period of the Changes Project research: 41% Asian (from countries such as China, Cambodia, India, Taiwan, South Korea, and Tibet, for example), 36% Hispanic/Latino (from countries such as El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico, and Puerto Rican born U.S. citizens), 21% Caucasian (from countries such Russia, the Republic of Moldova, Uzbekistan, and the United States mainland, for example), and 2% Middle Eastern (from countries such as Iran and Israel).

**International Language Institute**

The International Language Institute of Massachusetts (ILI), begun in 1984, is a Northampton, Massachusetts based, non-profit language school providing comprehensive training in English and other languages. ILI is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training and serves approximately 550 learners per year. The school's teaching philosophy is learner-centered and participatory.

ILI has been funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education since 1987 to provide free services to immigrants and refugees. ILI's free programs seek to meet the needs of immigrant learners in their roles as individuals, parents, workers, and community members. Most ILI learners are employed adults. They come from a broad range of countries and cultures including Brazil, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Congo, Ecuador, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Taiwan, Tibet, and Turkey.

In Northampton, ILI provides free ESOL classes, with employment and computer literacy components. Instruction is supported by trained volunteer tutors from the community. ILI also matches immigrant learners with native English speakers who are interested in practicing the learner's native language. Learners also have access to ILI's Self-Access Center, which houses an Internet-connected computer lab, and video and audio equipment.

In addition, ILI serves immigrants through an ESOL Distance Learning pilot program in Springfield in collaboration with the Corporation for Public Management, offers ESOL Teacher certificate courses and other teacher training programs, and a small international Intensive English program. It also provides the language program at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts and language and cultural awareness programs on-site at area businesses and organizations.

**The Mentor Program**

The Mentor Program (MP) at Holyoke Community College (HCC) is a college transition program that was founded in 1993 to serve learners in various educational programs in the Holyoke, Massachusetts area who are interested in higher education, but have traditionally had limited access to college. The program has been funded by grants from the Nellie Mae Fund for Education and the Massachusetts Department of Education. The program is part of a formal collaboration with three other Holyoke adult literacy providers, and works with six additional education programs, including three public schools. Approximately 20 mentors from HCC work with learners from these nine programs. The program is bilingual, offering writing workshops, mini-courses, panel discussions, tours and field trips, academic advising and personal counseling in both English and Spanish. HCC mentors work closely with newly enrolled and prospective community college learners, informing them about the community college experience and offering academic and personal support to help them make a successful transition to college.

The Mentor Program serves Hampden and Hampshire County, with the majority of learners living in Holyoke. In 1999 the Mentor Program worked with approximately 300 adult learners enrolled in adult basic education programs, secondary public schools and Holyoke Community College. Ninety percent of the learners were female, 10% male. Eighty-five percent were Latino, primarily Puerto Rican; 2% were African American, 10% Caucasian and 3% mixed ethnicity. Of 300 learners, four were physically handicapped. One hundred and forty-four were ESOL learners. Thirty were homeless at some point during the year. Two hundred and fifty were either pregnant or parenting. One hundred percent of the learners were low-income learners, living on incomes below the poverty line. Of these, 90% were either welfare or SSI recipients.

**Read/Write/Now**

The Read/Write/Now Adult and Family Learning Center (RWN) is a learner-centered, multi-cultural literacy program sponsored by the Springfield City Library and funded with federal, state, and private funds. The Center has served adult beginning and developing readers and writers of the greater Springfield area since 1987. RWN offers a supportive environment using a whole language based curriculum and computers for word processing and publishing of learner writing. In the 1999/2000 program year, the program will serve 55-65 learners in small classes with teams of teachers and trained volunteer support. The Center offers adult basic education classes, a family literacy program funded by an Even Start grant with adult basic education, early childhood education, parent and children together time, parent education and home learning. The center offers the only evening Pre-GED class in the city.

For the period 10/98-4/99, 52% of RWN learners were women and 48% men. Thirty-three percent of learners were Black (African American or Jamaican), another 33% were Hispanic (Puerto Rican), 29% were White (French Canadian, Irish, Dutch) and 5% were Asian (Korean, Vietnamese). The majority of learners (72%) are under 45 years of age: 23% fall between 45 and 60 years, with 5% over 60. Forty-six percent of all learners are employed while 54% are not employed, although they may be receiving transitional assistance benefits, including unpaid community service work, disability, workmen's compensation, Social Security benefits and family support.

Over the past three years since welfare reform was instituted, Read/Write/Now knows of ten learners who have left school because of the effects of welfare reform, and estimate that an additional ten learners left for the same reason.

**University of Massachusetts at Amherst Labor/Management Workplace Education Program.**

The Labor/Management Workplace Education Program (LMWEP) at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst offers classes, special projects, programs, and participatory action research projects to workers and employers throughout Western Massachusetts and to UM/Amherst employees, primarily to those workers who are members of the labor unions that are part of the program's employer/union partnership on campus. These courses and programs provide opportunities to workers to explore and act upon issues that affect their working lives. LMWEP defines workplace education as the set of skills necessary to make critical decisions on the job, at home, and in the community. These skills include action research, leadership, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, as well as basic computer, reading, writing, English, and math. Special projects include a weekly workers' radio show, video and media projects, the *We Are More Than You See* workplace writers series

of publications, and workers' support groups around issues such as classism and learning disabilities. LMWEP publishes on empowerment approaches to worker education and provides consultation to emerging programs in the field.

LMWEP seeks to involve management, labor, and learners at every step of program operations. The program adheres to a participatory empowerment philosophy that focuses on workers as whole people. Founded in 1987, LMWEP is an award-winning employer/union partnership between the University of Massachusetts, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1776, and the University Staff Association/Massachusetts Teachers Association.

LMWEP mails spring and fall semester course program flyers to over 2200 AFSCME and USA/MTA union members: classified staff who are office, service and trades workers. Staff workers also sign up for LMWEP classes and projects that are listed in the university's Training and Development catalog, which is mailed to all employees: over 6,000 workers, including classified, professional, and technical staff, graduate student employees, administrators, and faculty. Out of that pool of employees, more than 200 UM/Amherst workers have participated as learners in our program in the past two years. In addition, LMWEP offers ESOL services in Easthampton, a writing class in Springfield, workplace education services for at-risk youth in Franklin and Hampshire counties, a literacy and a computer class in Huntington, and workplace education liaison services for employers and unions in Western Massachusetts.

## *How the Changes Team Worked*

The Changes Project was a two-year participatory action research project that grew to three years of data collection and analysis. Individual learners affected by the three issues under investigation formed the core group of researchers and analysts. Five half-time site research facilitators (SRFs) and the project coordinator worked with and supported the efforts of the learners. Data was gathered from a multiplicity of learners enrolled in a diversity of program types and settings using an array of data collection methods by a large and diverse group of researchers. The project engaged an evaluator who facilitated a participatory evaluation process midway through the research project, which served to inform the subsequent data collection and analysis activities.

Adult literacy and education practitioners and researchers shaped the conception of the project. The implementation of the project was supported and revised with the expertise of learners, SRFs, the project coordinator, a methodological consultant, researchers, an evaluator, and a research advisory board. Analysis was ongoing throughout the project, allowing for extensive

"In some ways, because the way the state is going, and the laws, I feel more hopeless. I feel like nobody wants to hear... what we have to tell them. On the flip side of that, I feel more hope. I think through doing this work, and through looking at people's lives, you find out that (we) have all these other rich things in (our) lives – all these other skills, these support networks. People are helping each other. There are all these other possibilities within these terrible times. There are other possibilities for progress, and seeing that people can survive and actually do really well in these times... has given me a lot of hope."

*Site Research Facilitator*

discussion about alternative explanations and also helping to direct further and deeper investigation.

Participation – both philosophically and practically – was central to our work in the Changes Project. We know from the literature on participatory action research that the engagement of those individuals most directly affected by the issue under investigation brings a perspective to the research that's not often heard. Consequently, the data gathered is more likely to have validity within its context. In addition, the process itself may strengthen the very skills and knowledge participants need to create meaningful change in their lives. These principles are at the core of this study and our goal to engage adult learners in understanding the three issues and their effects on learning.

Certain beliefs and assumptions shaped our methodology. These beliefs and assumptions spanned two arenas: first, those informing the way research is conducted (e.g. why we chose to do participatory research). Second, those that inform the ways research and inquiry connect to education and learning (e.g. the processes of inquiry, sense-making, analysis, and public presentation as pathways to educational achievement).

The following key assumptions and beliefs influenced the way research was conducted in this project:

- Research conducted in partnership with those directly affected by the issues becomes a process through which we learn and hear from those in the best position to know and in the best position to act on what they know.
- Adults learners have a wide range of expertise derived from their particular experiences and contexts, and are in the best position to articulate their knowledge as it relates to them and their communities.

The following assumptions and beliefs informed the ways in which learners engaged in the project:

- Research is a process of learning, generating knowledge, building skills and capacities (including strengthening voice and the ability to express ourselves and advocate for ourselves), and taking action to make desired changes.
- Social change begins with personal change – the personal and the political are connected.

21

The multi-layered nature of the Changes Project and our commitment to working within a participatory research framework also shaped three ground rules for our work. Our commitment to these three ground rules helped us to live our philosophy.

1. Moving from Local to Whole and Back Again: On the "local" or program level, the Changes Project was comprised of research teams of learners and a half-time site research facilitator. As a whole, it was comprised of all five teams, the project coordinator, as well as the methodological consultant and evaluator, and members of the Research Advisory Group. Throughout the project, the work moved between the "local" of the individual teams and the "whole" of the entire project.

2. Making the Work Accessible: One of our key assumptions is that there are multiple ways of learning, developing knowledge, and articulating knowledge. In order to work together we needed to be inclusive of these multiple ways and ensure that the substance of our work – the "talk" and "text" – was accessible to all of us. This was an ongoing challenge because of the diverse literacy and schooling levels, multiple languages, diverse cultures and different "home" programs of the participants.

3. Conducting Research in Ways That Made Sense Locally: The members of the research teams knew best how to talk with their peers and colleagues. Sometimes we used different means of gathering information because doing so meant that we would get better information. Research team members led the way.

The project was designed to have three phases of data collection, each containing a round of interviews, one focus group and the administration of one survey. Observation was an ongoing part of the project. Because of its participatory action research structure, analysis occurred at a number of places within the Changes Project. Each site team conducted analysis of the data they gathered. The Site Research Facilitators group (which included the five SRFs and the project coordinator) also conducted analysis, and the whole project conducted analysis together. Teams engaged in a variety of analytic activities in addition to straight text coding. These other analytic activities included the use of trees, theater, and metaphor analysis.

Because our research was rooted in participatory action research traditions, the critical junctures between data gathering, analysis and action were key sources of data, key catalysts, and locations for powerful analysis and key opportunities for taking action. These critical junctures included writing activities, investigation, action to spur institutional changes, personal assistance, and presentation of research on issues of critical importance to the learners working as researchers.

These ground rules, assumptions and beliefs represent an overview of the Changes Project's philosophical approach to methodology. See the section How We Did Our Work for a detailed description of how we conducted our research in a way that supports our philosophy.

## *Who We Talked With*

Investigation by teams focused on issues relevant to the learners enrolled at the participating programs. Researchers at the Center for New Americans investigated all three issues, those at the International Language Institute investigated both the changing workplace and immigration reform. The Mentor Program team and one team from Read/Write/Now (RWN) investigated welfare reform impact. (A second RWN team briefly investigated the changing nature of work but disbanded due to scheduling issues.) Researchers from the Labor/Management Workplace Education Program at UM/Amherst investigated the changing workplace.

**Overall Demographics for Participants**

Over the course of the study, 254 adults participated through interviews, focus groups and writing groups. 366 adult learners responded to an issue focused survey. These participants reflect the diversity of learners enrolled in the five programs and specifically include those who have been or are affected by welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing nature of work. Learners at the five sites include refugees, immigrants, migrants, people on welfare and displaced workers and range in age from 18 – 82 years. The educational levels of learners at all five partner programs varies greatly, from very beginning literacy skills and English language to GED ready, transitioning to college, and post-college. Most of the learners are low to low-moderate income levels. The length of time in the United States for newcomer participants ranged from 4 months to more than 10 years. More than 74% of participants who participated in changing workplace investigations were currently employed either part-time, full-time, in a work-study position or as part of their work requirement for welfare. Years of service at UM/Amherst for those who participated in the UM/Amherst research ranged from one to 35.

**Partner Program Participant Demographics**

The Center for New Americans heard from 91 learners. Fifty-five percent were Asian (from Thailand, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea), 29% were Latino/Hispanic (from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico), 15% were Caucasian (from Russia and Moldova) and 1% were Middle Eastern. Of these 91 learners, 70% were women and 30% were men.

The International Language Institute heard from 67 learners. Thirty-eight percent were Latina/Latino (from Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Dominican Republic), 34% were Asian (from Tibet, Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, and Thailand), 23% were Caucasian (from Poland, Turkey, Germany, France, and Russia), 1.5% were Middle Eastern (from Iran) and 1.5% were African (from Congo). Of these 67 learners, 59% were women and 41% were men.

The Mentor Project heard from 103 learners. Eighty percent were Latinas, 16% were Caucasian, 3% were of mixed ethnicity and 1% were African American. One hundred percent were pregnant or parenting women. All were low-income single mothers who were current or former welfare recipients.

The RWN teams heard from 85 learners. Of these, 54% were women and 44% were men. (Two percent did not indicate their gender.) Thirty-one percent were African/American, 26% were Caucasian, 19% were Latina/Latino, 11% were Caribbean, 5% were Asian, 4% were of mixed ethnicity and one percent was African. (Three percent did not identify their ethnicity.) Fifty-three percent were current or former welfare recipients.

The UM team heard from 274 individuals. One hundred percent were employed at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. Seventy-one percent were women and 28% were men. (One percent of survey respondents did not identify their gender.) Of the total participants, 62% were members of USA/MTA, 32% were members of AFSCME, one percent were members of SEIU and one percent were non-unit staff. (Three percent did not indicate their affiliation.) Participants worked in areas across the university, including library assistants, custodians, tradesworkers, HVAC (heating, ventilating and air-conditioning) maintainers, dining hall supervisors, nutrition educators, academic office administrators, secretaries, food services, the housing department, union stewards from the USA/MTA, as well as staff from the UM/Amherst Extension program.

# What We Found

Looking at the work we've done, three things are particularly striking. One, the way we conducted this work (using participatory action research techniques) provided those learners involved as researchers with the project the same opportunities and perspectives that our recommendations emphasize as important. We talk about this in Impact of the Changes Project on Researchers. Two, the incredible importance of understanding the context in which learners live their lives, particularly the variety of supports learners weave together, which is discussed in The Web of Support. Three, the connection between the effects of the three issues – as one researcher said: "If you don't have money, you need welfare help. You need food. If you don't eat, you can't learn. If you don't learn, you can't find a job. It's a chain." The importance of respect and the opportunity to achieve education and life goals was common to welfare recipients, newcomers, and workers alike. As you read our findings in each of the issue areas, the overlap will be evident.

## *The Impact of the Changes Project on Researchers*

The most heartening and hopeful outcome we see as a result of our work in the Changes Project is the powerful impact on those of us who participated as researchers and site research facilitators. The impact of this research project often reflects the very changes many of the researchers told us they wanted and needed to make in their lives. We heard, for example, about the importance of support in people's lives, and we see how this theme of support played out in our own group, in its widening circle of effects. As we gained skills and confidence, built friendships and gained allies, we strengthened our own feelings of power and voice. This in turn helped us to be better researchers, to speak more effectively to diverse audiences about our work, our beliefs, and our commitments. Our ability to support others – both in our personal and our professional lives – was strengthened as well.

"It is the power of peoples' stories that has changed me."

*Research Team Member*

The changes we saw in ourselves through the course of this project fortify our commitment to participatory research. Participatory research and inquiry-based learning are powerful methods for deepening understanding of particular issues and their contexts. These methods also support those who participate by strengthening skills used in other areas of their lives, and help them to create meaningful change in their lives and communities. The following section highlights some of the impact this work has had on us as researchers and site research facilitators.

**Communication, Literacy & Job Skills**

Research team members talked about how the Changes Project increased their ability to communicate, to improve their literacy and English language skills, to do well in college, and to develop job-related skills. Research team members talked about how the Changes Project

helped them communicate, improve their literacy and English language skills, do well in college, and develop job related skills. As one said: "I've improved my skills in communication, specially doing presentations." Others talked about enhancing their literacy skills: "My family notices changes. I do my homework. My reading has gotten better." For others, the project helped them develop college-level research skills: "There's so much that I didn't know beforehand," said a researcher now enrolled in a four-year college, "how to analyze data, how to... actually participate in the research, which has really helped me now that I'm taking certain courses."

Many team members learning English talked about how participation helped to improve their language skills, to "lose [the] fear to talk in English." Others said that the project had given them "skills for future jobs." And several people talked about developing cross-cultural skills, as this woman told us: "I... learn about how I can work with other people... who work in the United States from many countries."

Teachers involved in the project as site research facilitators talked about how their work in the Changes Project taught them to be better teachers and researchers:

> "This project has given me that ability [to be a reflective teacher] because you really have to listen when you're doing research. It's helped me to let go of... being in charge of how the research goes. Learning to do that has changed me – it's changed the way I think about how knowledge gets made. It's really different when you do it in a group. What you come up with is much richer."

> "It feels like I get to use... some strong skills that I have and even develop them further. My team is very fun to work with so that feels great. And I'm just learning so much. I mean, to me, this is a good model... about how doing work can be learning and how learning can be valuable work."

**Self-Confidence**

Self-confidence, while connected to improved skills and to voice, stood out as a separate accomplishment or progress marker for the learners involved in the Changes Project. Researchers talked about how their self-confidence grew as a result of their work in the project. As one woman said, it made her feel "proud of telling people what I'm doing." We were told: "The [Changes] Project gives me more confidence. It gives me more responsibility. I know one day I'm gonna be doing something." One researcher said she discovered she was capable of "doing more things" than she had thought she could do, while another said, "It's changed me because I have more confidence in my work, in my English." And another team member told us, "I feel like I have more power over my life and I can help others."

Team meetings were an important place for researchers to develop self-confidence: "We've learned about each other and we've learned how to work together," one researcher said. Another team member talked about how the regular team meetings gave her the support she needed, both in her research and her personal life: "The regular meeting with... my team. We become very good friends. So, if I have a problem, in research and my personal life, I can ask them and I can get advice from them." She also talked about how the conference presentations increased her confidence: "And, I feel very proud when we had the conference [last year]. People, the audience, encouraged us to do research. And before the conference we didn't have confidence in what we have done and what we are doing."

**Developing a Voice & Creating a Community**

Some team members talked about how their research work helped them to develop a stronger voice in their personal lives. One woman told us:

> "I can express myself a lot better. I listen better to people. Because I listen, I can express myself better... I feel I can speak out better to doctors, teachers, and my kids, so they can understand me better. I listen to them better and I'm clearer with them. I set down clearer limits. They listen to me better."
>
> *Research Team Member*

"I can express myself a lot better. I listen better to people. Because I listen, I can express myself better... I feel I can speak out better to doctors, teachers, and my kids, so they can understand me better. I listen to them better and I'm clearer with them. I set down clearer limits. They listen to me better."

The researcher quoted below talked about how other team members gave her the support and encouragement she needed to develop a stronger voice:

> "My team members have taught me how to express myself better. They know me well, and they support me, they tell me when I'm not being clear, and they encourage me when I do well. They've helped me to feel more confident to speak out in public and to just say what I mean."

Several researchers told us that their experiences in the Changes Project helped them to develop a voice and to speak up for themselves and others. "I learn that I can get out of being shy," one team member told us, "and that I'm a... person that can help people. Also I learned that I don't have to be afraid to ask information, specially to my social worker."

Others spoke about how their participation in the Changes Project taught them to create safe spaces in which other participants could develop a voice, as this team member told us: "My favorite work is the interactions with different people. We set up three different groups [focus groups] and just asked three easy questions. You saw these people blossom then. It's a safe place where they can go and say what's on their mind without worrying about their job."

Many team members talked about the positive experience of building a community across differences. Several people said that getting to know team members from other sites taught them how to "interact with people from other cultures;" to suspend or to change their preconceived notions about people who were different from them, and "to be more open-minded about social issues." Others talked about how the project helped them to feel less isolated: "It's made me feel less alone in the work I'm doing," one of the site research facilitators said. "I'm not alone," said a team member. "As an immigrant, I'm not the only one who has problems with immigration."

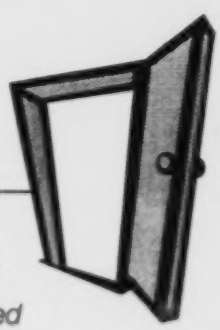
**Knowledge about Conducting Research**

Most of the team members we talked to had a lot to say about the knowledge they gained about how to do research. Because the project employed a variety of data collection and analysis techniques and approaches, researchers gained a wide range of research experiences. "I have learned to do interviews and focus groups," a team member said. "Some people think that those are easy, but I think you need preparation to do that. Which means I would take with me these skills after the project ends." Another listed the following skills she developed:

> "Analyzing surveys. I learned how to interview and work together as a group. It gave me ideas and questions. Data analysis on the computer. I've gained ideas on exercises and creative writing and poetry [metaphors]. I've learned about different cultures. Narrowing something so big down to size with data analysis."

Team members talked about the kinds of interpersonal skills they had to develop in order to be good effective interviewers or focus group facilitators. They learned to be "good listeners;" to be patient, dedicated, and "more accepting;" to ask the right questions; "not to be judgmental;" to work as part of a team; to "access peoples' life experience and wisdom, and create safe and trusting spaces to share their experience and desires for change."

Team members also talked about the analytical skills they developed in the Changes Project. For example, one learned "how people can compare real things with imagined things, as in a metaphor." Another talked about "strategies to get the most information out of people, such



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Rhonda Soto**, a Mentor Program team researcher, is the mother of one son. Rhonda graduated from Holyoke Community College and transferred to Mt. Holyoke College in 1998. She is bicultural, half Irish and half Puerto Rican, and speaks English and Spanish. (In the Changes Project) "I was in a safe environment with people who truly care. I felt this project had a great cause and would affect me personally. I have learned that I have a voice! I have inner strength. I can make a positive difference in a person's life. When I'm around people who care, I strive."*

as metaphor analysis." One researcher noted that, "You have to adapt the techniques of research to fit the culture [and] meet the needs of the people you are talking to," while another talked about learning "that there are some significant differences between traditional /scientific research and participatory action research."

**Knowledge About the Issues**

Changes Project team members talked at length about how their knowledge and understanding of the issues developed over time. Through collaborative work with the five research teams, team members and site research facilitators were able to learn about all three of the issues being investigated. This is reflected in the quotes below:

"What stands out is that welfare reform is really hurting. The emotional side has been tough – knowing people have to leave the program, how children are being affected. When people cry, it's hard."

*Research Team Member*

"I learned more about immigration, and the work force... I didn't realize that it was such a problem... that people were really struggling with... updating their [skills] and stuff like that."

"What stands out is that welfare reform is really hurting. The emotional side has been tough – knowing people have to leave the program, how children are being affected. When people cry, it's hard."

"I learn more about the change in the work place... about the whole image or whole picture... it's very good to know, especially for me. And also, I can understand the person who is struggling because of the problems in immigration."

The knowledge gained by engaging in this research also had an emotional impact on participants. One of the site research facilitators talked about how the project affected her sense of hope:

"In some ways, because the way the state is going, and the laws, I feel more hopeless. I feel like nobody wants to hear... what we have to tell them. On the flip side of that, I feel more hope. I think through doing this work, and through looking at people's lives, you find out that [we] have all these other rich things in [our] lives – all these other skills, these support networks. People are helping each other. There are all these other possibilities within these terrible times. There are other possibilities for progress, and seeing that people can survive and actually do really well in these times... has given me a lot of hope."

And another site research facilitator talked about the powerful knowledge she gained, both about the effects of the issues and about people's survival skills:

"I know a lot more about the issues than I did... I learned more technical information, but the most powerful information is about how it affects people's lives... the stories that they tell and... the survival skills and the living skills that people learn and the way they support each other."

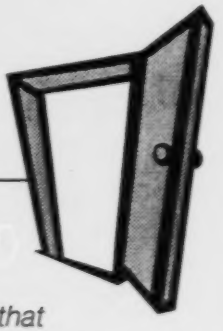
**Cross-Cultural Awareness & Self-Knowledge**

Team members had a lot to say about how the project enhanced their awareness of cultural and other differences and made them more able to work within diverse settings. As one site research facilitator put it: "It is the power of peoples' stories that has changed me." Another team member talked about how listening to others' stories teaches you about yourself: "Learning more about others is a part of knowing yourself better, and knowing and accepting yourself better, is a part of knowing and accepting others."

> "Learning more about others is a part of knowing yourself better, and knowing and accepting yourself better, is a part of knowing and accepting others."
>
> *Research Team Member*

Many people talked about cultural differences. As one researcher said, the project "made me aware of... cultural differences... in a different level... And that made me look within myself more... I had to go really deep to realize how I worked and how I processed things and how people deal in different ways... I had to analyze myself first." Another team member said that, as a result of her work with the Changes Project, "I know more about being sensitive to people, to people's skills, not only just culture, but being sensitive to what they can do and how people can do things differently. I also know that conflict can be a good thing."

Changes Project researchers spoke a great deal about the self-knowledge they gained through working with members of different teams who brought to the project such a rich diversity of



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Peter S. Baumann**, a researcher on the UM/LMWEP team.*

*"What I learned from working on this project first off is, none of us are so great that change couldn't help us be better people than we give ourselves credit for. I walked into the first meeting thinking I was the greatest thing to hit the pike and found that I, too, had some prejudices that I was not aware of. I thought no one could ever tell me that I wasn't the perfect person to sit in judgement of others because I never had a negative thought or prejudiced bone in my body. Well, lo and behold I did, and seeing it through other peoples' eyes I found that I, too had to make some changes in my opinions. I will be eternally grateful for this time of learning and growing that this project has taught me, and hope that I can always retain the benefits I have received from it. I am a better person for being part of the Changes Project and hope I will be able to share the benefits of it to make the people around me understand what it is all about and to hopefully improve the quality of life around me."*

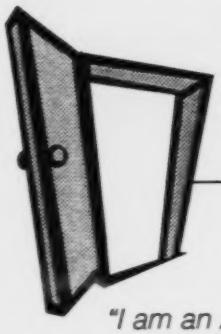
experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, educational levels, interests, and skills. One team member said: "I have grown so much in being a better and fairer person, seeing sides of people or reasons they are in certain situations, not by their own doings. [I have learned not to be] so critical about things I know nothing about." Several team members talked about how their work with other teams taught them to be more open-minded, and to understand their own biases. One team member said, "[The project] taught me how not to be so negative, to be more supportive, and to be more independent. I've learned not to be judgmental. I've learned how to respect other people's feelings or thoughts on the issue of welfare reform."

Another team member told us, "It's opened my eyes, this project. It's opened my eyes to a lot of things I wasn't aware of. It made me realize that I had some prejudice that I didn't know I even had." And another said: "We need to understand each other... to understand the opinion from other people in my project. We need to make harmonize." According to one site research facilitator, the project did in fact help many of us to achieve that harmony:

> "What strikes me most is the deepening of not only our understanding of the issues, but also our understanding of each other. By that I mean, the deepening of people's compassion, friendship, and love for each other. The dedication and devotion to try to understand each other's stories and/or issues."

**Community Involvement & Political Activism**

Many Changes Project researchers became involved in their communities and in larger political arenas as a result of their research activities. As one researcher told us, "Until I started working with the Changes Project, I wasn't really involved with the community at all." Since becoming part of the Changes Project, this learner has become very politically engaged.



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Karen Gladden**, a researcher for the RWN team.*

*"I am an African-American woman born and raised in Springfield, MA. I speak English. I am the mother of three boys, and a grandmother of eight – with two more on the way. I am forty-two years old. I attend an adult literacy program. I've been coming to it for between six and seven years. I am here for two reasons: to learn how to read and to get my GED. I am an ex-welfare recipient. My source of income is now SS and SSI. The reason why I was interested in welfare reform is to learn more about the changes and their effects on women and their children – it has a great effect on children and their parents. I think the only way for the policy makers to know what is going on is to come down and see for themselves. I hope all our findings and our research, I hope it helps them really realize that education is definitely the key. You can NOT get off AFDC without education, job training and day care."*

Among other activities, she has spoken at rallies, on radio shows, and in newspaper interviews on behalf of welfare recipients. "I always wanted to work within the community," another researcher told us, "so, if anything, it just strengthened what I wanted to do." Another team member said it this way: "I plan to be more involved in the community than I ever was before."

For one site research facilitator, learning about the issues that were investigated strengthened her resolve to build a stronger community network: "I think it [the Changes Project] has made me more aware of the issues that were kind of out there, but now I see really how they affect people's lives. And I see myself as part of that, that web of people. I'm committed to making our whole web stronger."

Another team member talked about activism as a way to develop human rights: "I want... to be [an] activist. I think this is very important... to the developing of human rights in some way. And the Changes Project is this place for people... to have a voice and to say something and try to change the system which is very complicated."

**New Directions**

As is evident in the preceding section, people talked about how their research experience led them to new understandings. Several team members talked about how the Changes Project affected their future plans by influencing their goals and aspirations. One team member talked about using her newly developed knowledge about the issues and her skills as an advocate:

> "It has made... me more aware of... what's going on with welfare reform, immigration reform, and work place reform... how all those areas really connect, and it's made me really want to make a difference and get more involved – in advocating for welfare recipients, [and]... for students. I'm getting so involved in this and really enjoying it, and enjoying working with the people that I'm working with and the network I've created."

Others talked about applying their research skills toward other kinds of work. "I'm interested in journalism," a team member told us. "I'm interested in stories. We've heard some hard time stories. People need to hear these stories." Another team member said, "It's become so much a part of my life now, it's something I'd like to work towards... if there is such a job out there for this type of work. [I'd like to] use my writing as part of it. And be able to work myself into some kind of job doing it... getting some grant money."

**Emotional Impact**

Over the course of two years of intensive work, Changes Project researchers experienced a wide variety of emotions. These ranged from the mixture of fear, confusion, curiosity, and excitement at the beginning of the project, to depression, as people became increasingly aware of the severe problems faced by the people we talked to, to elation as our work took shape and our research community got stronger. The following lists what researchers came up with to characterize the range of emotions they experienced throughout the life of the project:

"Confusing," "fun," "sense of power"
"Boost of and lack of self-confidence"
"Overwhelming," "exciting," "scary"
"Excited," "nervous," "unsure"
"A little depressed"
"A lot more aware of injustices"
"A lot depressed about things in general, how people are being mistreated, demoralized"
"We need to get together and try to make things better and talk about it to more people."
"I feel fulfilled because I have learned a lot of things, like how to do interviews, how to do focus group, how to express myself."
"I think I am lucky just to have the opportunity to be part of this group."
"That there's even more potential to empower people – person to person, through public presentations, by what we write about and what we do."

Much of the work we did with the Changes Project was challenging and often emotionally distressing; such as hearing about the difficulties many of adult learners we talked with face and feeling unable to provide necessary support. Many times, however, we managed to have "fun," to engage in activities that were productive as well as enjoyable. We found out that significant learning can occur when people are relaxed, know each other well, and are having fun. Many team members mention these moments when talking about their most memorable Changes Project activities. One team researcher told us:

> "I did a... program in the summer with students from GED centers in Holyoke. We did a whole role-playing and we included them in on the Changes Project. I'll never forget it, cause it was, it was just a lot of fun. I learned a lot from them... about different situations, different problems. It was just a lot of fun, the whole activity."

Several team members said that their favorite part of the project was getting together with other researchers. One team member said she enjoyed it "when we meet with everybody. Every group meets together and likes that. Because I know everybody, we talk a lot." Another team member told us: "I love our two day [Analysis Fests]. You get to see all the people you

don't see all year round, and I miss them, you know. They're good people. It's the real people that are in these things. And it's fun."

## *Understanding the Context of Learners' Lives*

When we talk about what we have learned in our two years of work on the Changes Project it's important to understand the way we've organized and interpreted our findings. Looking at the data we found it made sense to present two kinds of findings:

- The first group of findings identifies the kinds of supports needed for adult learners to pursue their education goals. It also paints a picture of the resourcefulness these adult learners bring to the often difficult and changing circumstances of their lives. We characterize this as a web of support. The metaphor of a web was chosen because it portrays the way various kinds of support – both present and missing – interconnect in each learner's life.

- The second group of findings outlines the specific ways in which welfare reform, immigration reform, and the demands of the changing workplace affect the lives of the adult learners with whom we spoke.

We set out to understand the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace on the lives and education of adult learners. We saw very quickly that each person has his or her own unique strengths, needs, supports, hopes, dreams, and goals. We began to see that we could not understand how these three issues affect learners without also examining the complex networks of support in which individuals pursue their education and life goals. It is within this network that these three issues play themselves out.

We began to see that we could not understand how these three issues affect learners without also examining the complex networks of support in which individuals pursue their education and life goals. It is within this network that these three issues play themselves out.

When learners talk about the kind of support they need to achieve their education and life goals a picture emerges of a network of interconnected strands. We've chosen to use the image of a web to portray support because it illustrates the ways learners bring together the diverse resources available to them to pursue their education and life goals. This network includes practical supports, inner resources, personal supports and institutional supports, all of which are described in greater detail below. The metaphor of a web is particularly powerful because it can illustrate how the strength or weakness, the absence or the presence of strands, affects the entire web. We found that the presence or absence of appropriate supports in a learner's life at any given moment has a very strong effect on their ability to reach their goals.

If we want, then, to tell the whole story of the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace on adult learners it is important to see a whole, multi-stranded web of support. The webs and strands change in reaction to shifting policies and landscapes of individuals' lives. They are built in part by individuals, in part by institutions and others with whom individuals interact. Those who are shaping policies and classroom practice must understand how these actions affect these strands – how they intersect with them, reshape them, add to, or eliminate them – within an individual's web. "One-size-fits-all" policies do not fit because learners are not all one size – they have different contexts, needs, strengths and supports that make up their web.

Most striking to us, these webs contain strands that are not about having, getting or receiving support from an individual or institution, but about ***giving support*** to others. Giving support helps to strengthen the recipient's web but can also strengthen the giver's. Most of the people we talked to spoke about their desire to be independent so that they can provide for, care for and inspire themselves and others. They were working hard to achieve this through a combination of their own efforts as learners and workers and by making use of supports available to them from public assistance, immigration agencies, their workplaces, their families, their communities, and so on. Although it was not always clear to the individuals we talked to, it became very clear to us that people function on a daily basis within these very complicated and changing webs of supports and that there are direct correlations between the supports a person has and the level of independence they are able to achieve. We know from this research that when people talk about their goal of becoming independent, independence often means being able to support others and being interdependent.

We found that the presence or absence of appropriate supports in a learner's life at any given moment has a very strong effect on their ability to reach their goals.

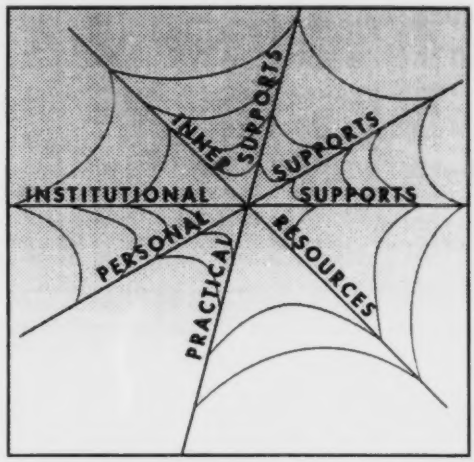
Based on the data collected in the Changes Project, we defined "support" as:

> An interconnected network of resources (both personal/internal and institutional/external), services, institutions, knowledge, abilities, people, and environments which people both need and provide one another in order to sustain life, stay in school, and stay on track toward completing their educational goals and becoming self-sufficient.

## The Web of Support

The data collected from participants in the Changes Project shows the following as essential supports for learners trying to complete their education goals and become self-sufficient:

- Practical supports, including affordable food, clothing and housing; health care; childcare; and transportation.
- Practical supports also include access to information, including specifics about rights as a worker, welfare recipient, or newcomer to the U.S.; and information about how to enroll and do well in school, as well as other academic, career and job guidance.
- Inner resources, including hopes, dreams, motivation, focus, determination, knowledge and ability and spiritual faith.
- Personal supports, including emotional and practical support; advocacy for individuals and programs; and the respect of peers, social workers, teachers, family members, and community.
- Institutional supports, including responsive institutions (schools, training programs, and workplaces); responsive state and national policies; and regulations that accommodate the needs and circumstances of individuals.




*The metaphor of a web is particularly powerful because it can illustrate how the strength or weakness, the absence or the presence of strands, affects the entire web.*

These practical supports cited above become more complex when explored within the context of an individual's life. It is not enough, for example, that daycare is available; it must fit with a mother's schedule and it must meet her criteria for quality. Nor is transportation useful just because it is available; it must fit a learner's schedule and go where the learner needs to go. Unfortunately, public transportation in much of Western Massachusetts is infrequent or unavailable. When it is available it's not useful unless potential users know how to use it. For English language learners this may also mean deciphering a schedule written in a foreign language. (51% of respondents to the immigrant-focused survey indicated they needed transportation assistance during their first six months in the U.S.)

The existence of education services, too, isn't enough to guarantee true access: schools must be responsive to the complex needs and circumstances of learners' lives. The adult learners we worked with have many responsibilities and others to whom they provide support. To meet these commitments, people make complicated and shifting arrangements in which they call upon various personal and institutional supports. What follows is a deeper explanation of several of these kinds of supports.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Inner Resources

When adult learners speak about welfare reform, immigration reform, and the demands of the changing workplace, the majority of their comments describe how these societal changes have created upheaval in their lives. The uncertainty and emotional stress of living with these changes can be demoralizing, yet people persevere. The adult learners we talked with are resourceful, and offer help to those in similar situations; they are motivated to improve their lives. The people we talked with were extremely articulate about their hopes and dreams for the future. Even learners facing dire situations talked about hopes for a better future and had plans for how to reach that better future. People we talked with know what they need and are extremely articulate in making recommendations for how to better meet their needs. You will find these recommendations in the Recommendations section.

Many of the learners we talked with said they believe inner resources are important supports that help them to reach their goals. The inner resources we heard about include hopes and dreams, motivation, focus and determination, knowledge and ability, and spiritual faith.

### Hopes and Dreams

Hopes and dreams were described as essential internal resources that sustain motivation and commitment. All of the people with whom we spoke have hopes and dreams and are able to articulate them clearly. They identify these hopes and dreams as essential to their ability to continue with their education, to fulfill their goals, and to meet the demands of life in general.

Newcomers to the United States, for example, arrive in this country with the dream of a better future for themselves and their families. This dream motivates them as learners to take on difficult tasks such as learning English, studying computers as an adult, and developing an understanding of American customs. For many people with whom we spoke, "a better future" means a good education for themselves or their children, buying a home, getting a better job or owning a business.

Welfare recipients also spoke of their hopes and dreams as a source of strength. As one learner in a GED program told us, "My goals and dreams, before welfare reform, were to finish up school, and get my GED, you know. I don't want to stay on welfare. I want to be an independent mother. I want to work for what I want. I don't want to sit down and wait on no checks." Another learner expressed her dreams this way: "What helps me stay in school is I have big dreams. I have big, big, big dreams. And that's gonna take college... I'm going to college; I really want to go. I am going. I know that with all my heart."

**Motivation, Focus and Determination**

For many welfare recipients, motivation, focus, and determination are strong internal sources of support they draw upon to maintain their momentum. One woman said, "I just focus on the good, tell myself not to think of the bad things" while another told us, "I stay focused, I do what is before me, and I just keep doing it." And another learner said, "I know it's hard, but I just open my mind, to encourage myself so I can do it. And no matter what happens, I'm going to do it."

As in the following quote, learners talked about the unique combination of internal resources that keep them going:

> "What helps me meet my goals? Well, spiritual wise, praying and faith, and then discipline, just discipline and discipline. Encouraging yourself, and just believing in yourself. And when you get down, you're not going to always feel like doing something. That's when discipline comes in. Just enduring, picking yourself up and saying, okay, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this – and then just do it."

We also heard inner resources described as: the "ability to overcome obstacles," "the strength to fight," the need to have "endurance," "putting your mind to it," "forcing yourself," and the need to "have faith in yourself."

**Knowledge & Ability**

Adults have a wealth of accrued knowledge, gained through life experience in both formal and informal settings. Knowledge is information, but it is also wisdom from experiences and skills. There are many types of knowledge: knowledge about people and interpersonal relationships; knowledge about the external world; knowledge about how to do certain things; knowledge about art and music; knowledge about how to manage our daily lives. Knowledge informs decisions, and knowledge underlies ability.

The knowledge that adults bring to education programs is a powerful resource not only for themselves, but also for their classmates, peers, and teachers. Relevant and meaningful instruction uses this pre-existing knowledge as a foundation for ongoing learning. As new knowledge and abilities are gained, it can be applied in all aspects of life: at the workplace, at home, with family and friends.

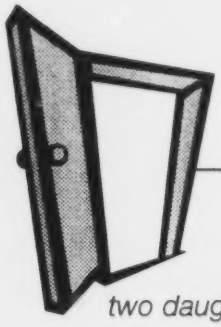
Every adult has knowledge and ability which he or she may desire to strengthen. One man spoke about his strengths and what he hoped to gain by returning to school:

> "I know how to mess with electrical wires and things like that, so I want to get more advanced, and by me finishing this school and getting my GED, that will help me out. I worked with my hands all my life. Now I want to work with my head".

Returning to school is not always the answer, however, as one of the women we interviewed said, "There are a lot of things that you can learn, even when you're out of school... You can always learn something". Another man, when asked if he wanted more on-the-job training, said this:

> "Training? Why do I need [formal on-the-job] training? Because I always did repair work in my life. I built my own house, I build garages, I build shacks. I'm a handy-man. I learn from my brothers, they were carpenters and that's how I picked it up".

As these examples show, knowledge and ability are part of each individual's web of support, both in terms of the supports people need and the supports that they offer others. Knowledge and ability are also context-dependent. When contexts – including goals – change, new skills and knowledge are often necessary.



**Spiritual Faith**

Spiritual faith is a powerful source of strength for a number of people with whom we spoke. Faith helps to sustain hopes and dreams, gives meaning to people's lives, and provides a daily

## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Betty Falcon**, a Mentor Program team researcher, is the mother of two daughters and an infant son. Betty was born in Puerto Rico, speaks Spanish and English, and is in her late thirties. She graduated from Holyoke Community College in 1998, where she spent her first two years learning English in the college's ESOL program. After graduating, Betty worked as a writing teacher for the Mentor Program and gave birth to a son. She plans to continue her education at a four-year college next year. Betty is a talented writer, poet, and social critic:*

*Tengo tanto que decirle a esta sociedad*
*De como nos sentimos en esta tierra extraña.*
*Y es esta misma sociedad la que me dice "te escuchamos,*
*Pero tú opinión no nos sirve de nada."*

*[I have much to tell this society*
*About how I feel in this strange land.*
*Yet it is this same society that tells me, "I am listening,*
*But your opinion has no value."]*

source of rejuvenation. One woman told us: "Sometimes I think I'm crazy – I talk to the Lord." Another said: "The best thing about my life is God. I can go to Him with any problem, and He's always there to listen." Still another woman, a teen parent, told us: "I realize life is too precious for me to give up." An immigrant going for her citizenship interview talked about how she prayed to God; this helped her to cope with her nervousness about her upcoming interview. In all, 67.5% of the respondents to a survey on welfare reform told us that their spiritual faith was a support that helped them to stay in school, while 26.5% said that a religious organization provided them with the support they needed to stay in school.

**Other Inner Resources**

Inner resources often are unique to an individual. One of the women with whom we spoke, for example, talked about a strong source of support she had in the past continuing to give her strength in her current life. When she was a child, her mother was put into a mental institution, and it was her grandmother who raised her and her siblings. She remembers her grandmother's strength and "how much she gave to others." Although her grandmother is no longer living, her daily conversations with her "grandmother-in-her-mind" are a source of strength and sustenance for her. As you can see, inner resources may be hard to quantify, but they are powerful forces that play a crucial role for learners participating in the Changes Project. In certain situations they can help to offset some of the impact welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work have on people. Inner resources connect with other kinds of support, such as personal supports and institutional supports, which are described below. Often they are the most flexible and responsive supports, those that can be shifted within an individual's web to bridge gaps where other supports are missing. As such, they can be a powerful force in the lives of learners trying to cope with uncertain circumstances.

## Personal Supports

We categorize personal supports as practical and emotional supports available from other individuals, be they family, friends, teachers, fellow learners, co-workers or community members.

**Family and Friends**

Naturally, we heard a lot about the ways in which family and friends are a source of support and encouragement. Support from family and friends included emotional support and respect, as well as practical supports.[1] A beginning literacy learner we talked with said this about the support he gets from his family:

> "... My family plays a big role in my life and without the support of my family, I don't think I would be here in school right now. My wife and my kid, they motivate

[1]Family and friends offer very critical practical supports, including childcare, housing, helping to pay bills, etc. This kind of practical support can often mean the difference in whether individuals and families become homeless, for example.

me and they help me to come back to school, and I think without them I won't be here right now."

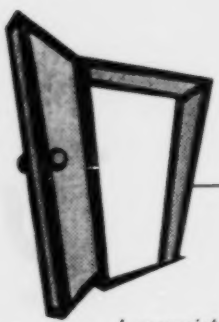
Newcomers also get support from family and friends who help them find work and understand a new language. During a focus group with newcomers, we heard this:

> "I could not speak English. When I was in Russia I used to speak German, but not English. My husband could not speak English. He is a little deaf. We were without language. Only our relatives – my nieces – they speak English fluently. They helped."

Family and friends are very often a strong and responsive strand of support in the webs individuals create. Eighty-one percent of learners surveyed in the welfare reform survey indicated that family was an important support. This kind of support is one of the more flexible strands of support in the webs and can often bridge the gaps in other strands for short amounts of time.

**Teachers, Tutors, Other Learners, Community Members and Co-Workers**

Teachers, tutors, community members, and co-workers were also identified as personal supports. For learners responding to the welfare reform survey, 91.6% indicated that teachers are



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

*I'm **Ivonne Rivera** from Puerto Rico and came to US two years ago. I consider myself to be an outgoing person. But in the past I didn't have the chance or maybe I didn't recognize how productive I could be for others.*

*Help others through my skills never pass by my mind until I became involved in the Changes Project. A lot of ideas came to my mind each time that I heard the stories. I'm always thinking, "How can I help?" – that bothered me. But as a researcher I could provide suggestions, ideas and advice.*

*This was a great chance to improve both personally and professionally my skills, but most important I could expand my knowledge. I learned how I can help other people and not make a judgement about them. I learned how to be a better person, each day always to have in my mind other people.*

*Ivonne Rivera represented CNA's Amherst site on the CNA research team. When the research project began she had just graduated from CNA's Advanced Intermediate class. She also works as CNA's Community Outreach Assistant.*

a support that enables them to stay in school, 42% said other learners were. Eloquently describing the importance of having a combination of support, one learner told us:

> "You need support. You need support at home, you need support in the classrooms, from the teacher and the students, that helps you to learn more. Because if you don't get no support from home or the students or teacher, you just feel like it's a lost cause."

For many, community members are an ever-present source of support. Immigrants who have been in the country a number of years help the newly arrived to settle in and meet immediate needs. An immigrant told us: "I got support from Polish people who helped me find an apartment, school and work. Because I don't have any family here." Those with more experience with the welfare system can help new applicants with basic tasks like filling out forms, as well as more complicated issues, such as how to protect their rights.

At the Center for New Americans and International Language Institute newcomers often get their jobs through other newcomers they've met at school. Participants in the Changes Project report that co-workers at these jobs can be a support or a barrier. Some newcomer workers described receiving support from their peers in their workplaces. One newcomer said:

> "Also [I get support] from the people I work with because they talked to me slowly and patiently, they understand me and I understand the people."

At UM/Amherst there is also evidence that workers can react negatively to their colleagues taking classes. Some fear that those enrolled in classes will have more absences from the work site, and consequently, that they will be left to fill in and do more work. This climate of disapproval means that some do not pursue educational opportunities.

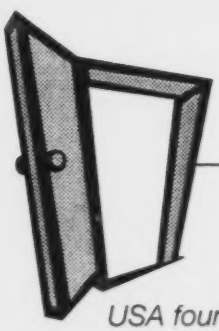
Sometimes personal supports from an individual's past continue to assist him or her in the present. Many participants talked about their memories of a role model, teacher, family member or friend whose past encouragement and actions continue to serve as a source of motivation in their current lives. People also talked about how concrete supports they had in the past are part of their present: "My mother helped me with childcare [in the past], that's how come I could come back to school."

The Changes Project research teams also functioned as places of support for learners and workers who participated in the project. This is explored in depth in the Impact of the Changes Project on Researchers section.

**Institutional Supports**

We categorize institutional supports as those that may be available from organizations such as the adult literacy and education programs involved in this project, public entities such as the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, non-profit organizations and local groups. We also found that sometimes one's workplace acts as a support.

Institutional support named as key by those we heard from was extensive. In this section we focus on school and the key institutions involved with welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing workplace. However, it is important to note that learners indicated a number of other institutional supports necessary to help them reach their goals. These included quality daycare programs and establishments (82% of learners surveyed about welfare reform indicated that daycare helps them to stay in school); reliable, convenient public transportation systems (65.5% said transportation helps them to stay in school); high-quality and affordable healthcare services (64% said healthcare services helped them to stay in school); and adequate information and referral services. Parent workers, for example, need excellent childcare, not only so they can work, but to pursue education to upgrade their skills. Low-income learners, whether they are native-born or immigrants, need health care so they and their children can be healthy enough to attend school and have the energy to work. Welfare recipients without cars need good public transportation so they can move efficiently between school, work, childcare centers and their appointments. These institutional supports need to intersect with other supports, practical, internal, and personal. When they do, the whole web is stronger, when they don't intersect or are non-existent, the whole web is significantly weaker.



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

*My name is **Bussarakum Humphrey**. I came from Thailand. Now I stayed in USA four years and 4 months. I live in Greenfield with my American husband. We didn't have children with each other. But I've one son and three grandchildren in Thailand. I work with the Center for New Americans. I'm happy and enjoy when I work with CNA. I'm also proud with myself when I work with CNA. I like to help people who are not citizens same as me. My new life in USA went well and perfect in everything because CNA help me. But two things I didn't finish yet are getting my American citizenship and my driver's license. They are very hard for me. In the past I worked with a newspaper for almost 17 years in my country.*

*Bussarakum Humphrey represented CNA's Greenfield site on the CNA research team. In April 1999, she graduated from the Intermediate class in Greenfield. She also teaches in the Greenfield Computer Lab.*

**School as an Institutional Support**

Because the purpose of this study is to learn how welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace impact adult learners, the question of how school helps learners is particularly critical. Many of the people we spoke with talked about the ways in which their schooling helped them face one or more of the three issues. They believe that school and the education it offers is a vital support, essential for them to meet their goals, reach their dreams, and sustain their hopes. School enables people to get the skills, degrees, training, or access to additional education and training they need in order to make a living wage, do meaningful work and "be somebody." It teaches them to read and write, learn English, better manage daily tasks and function well in an English-dominant, text-based world and affords them the opportunity to make connections with others.

The learners we talked with – newcomers, current and former welfare recipients and workers – told us over and over again how important school was to their ability to gain the specific skills and information they need to manage their lives and to feel less dependent on others.

One adult at a literacy site described how the skills he gained in school benefited him in many aspects of his life:

> "Well, now I can read newspaper, I can read our newsletters from work. I can go to different places – like the hospitals – and give them more information because this time I'm doing it myself, I don't have anybody else doing it for me. If I need information, I can go to the library and research for books that I get the information that I need."

School for newcomers also provides the key support of English language classes and often, translation assistance. A learner from Puerto Rico spoke for many of those we heard from when she said:

> "They are teaching me to learn English, speaking, writing and understanding the American culture, everything is different. To know help me a lot."

Eighty-one percent of respondents to the immigrant-focused survey indicated that they needed school to learn English during their first six months in the U.S. Seventy-five percent indicated they get information or help at school to help them reach their education and life goals.

The development of skills, accomplishment of goals and lessening of isolation school provides also help learners build self-esteem and self-confidence. Learners in education programs feel more hopeful and determined to meet their goals than they did before.

> "I want to tell lawmakers, How did you get where you are? First of all, you have an education, you got that... I would like to tell them we really want to try, but they're not giving us the chance."
>
> *A literacy learner*

The relationship between school, hope, power, and confidence is articulated clearly by this woman, who is enrolled in a literacy program:

> "School has given me hope – to know that I'm going to be somebody in life. As far as reading, writing, being able to go in a store and just think up the math problem without using a calculator. Confidence, cause you know, learning is power. And power is confidence, cause you know what you're doing. So that's hope for me."

**Other Institutional Supports**

In addition to educational institutions, other institutions have the potential to provide important supports to learners. These include government agencies (for example, the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and the INS), non-profit organizations (including Western Massachusetts Legal Services and Arise for Social Justice, a local grassroots advocacy and support organization) and coalitions (like WETAC, the Welfare, Education and Training Access Coalition in Massachusetts). We have heard how these and other institutions provide support. Eighty-six percent of learners surveyed about welfare reform indicated that receiving a welfare check helped them to stay in school, 72% said that food stamps helped them to stay in school. Other examples include the help Western Massachusetts Legal Services has provided to several women facing their two-year time limit to navigate the complex rules of welfare reform and apply for extensions. Arise for Social Justice provides current information on welfare reform rules and regulations and assistance in understanding ones rights and responsibilities, help in identifying resources and support in advocating for oneself.

We have also heard how institutions (other than school) could provide better support. For example, a woman waiting to hear from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to change her immigration status said:

> "I need, well, not only me, but all the people that really want to work can have this possibility, and that the response from immigration will be faster, so people don't have to wait long time without doing anything."

Although immigrants and refugees must depend on the INS to meet their immigration goals, we heard a lot about the ways the INS could be more responsive to the needs of newcomers. (See The Impact of Immigration Reform section for more details.)

We heard a lot about the ways in which the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) could be more supportive and responsive to learners' needs. Here, for example, is a paraphrase of one woman's story:

> "My child was sick. I found out my [DTA] worker had not sent in my Medicaid application. I went to DTA. They were closed. I went again the next day and had to wait 45 minutes to get my temporary Medicaid card. Later, I found out that my last worker had not sent my file to my new worker so the Medicaid application had never been sent in."

Workers we talked with at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst had very clear ideas about the ways in which their workplace could be more supportive of them. Most believe UM/Amherst gives inadequate support for training and education. They would like more institutional support for pursuing their education, including free or less costly continuing education classes and more evening courses to attend. One respondent to a UM/Amherst survey wrote:

> "My biggest gripe is that classified workers have to pay 50% for night or summer classes, which is financially difficult. We can take day classes free, but cannot get release time. Therefore, what benefit is it, really, and how can we grow personally and professionally without it?"

Workers seek career ladders, staff development training, and support for employees getting onto a career track. They cite programs offered in the 1970s that provided apprenticeships and career track opportunities for workers to advance past entry-level jobs. Other workers talked about creating a UM/Amherst educational benefit that would provide access to technical training at other state institutions and prepare them for skilled jobs and trades work at the university.

Workers who did try to use the release time policies at the university to pursue education found the application of the policies to be arbitrary. Many classified workers protest that professional staff is offered much more flexibility for education and training. One UM/Amherst worker stated: "Professionals are given release time more freely than classified workers." Another worker wrote, "I see professionals come and go to classes without having to 'get permission' or make up the time. With us, [classified workers], it's just the opposite."

While many workers at UM/Amherst talked about the obstacles to accessing the education benefits available to them, many others found ways to use that institutional support. Everyone we talked with at UM/Amherst who took LMWEP classes, training and development workshops, university classes and continuing education courses said that they were appreciative of those educational experiences. One worker talked about quitting college as an undergraduate because she had a learning disability. She said she learned to hate school and higher education because her undergraduate college did not help her deal with the difficul-

ties her disability created. Years later, she came to work at UM/Amherst, where she said that she "unwittingly found a home" and went back to school:

> "Through the beneficence of the University Without Walls and other people and places, I went on to get my higher education and to understand myself as being part of this instead of separate from it."

It's important to note that the idea of a web of support in people's lives was most evident in the data collected from people we talked with about immigration and welfare issues, and less so in the workplace data. Our sense at the UM/Amherst site was that participants more commonly understood support as either emotional or personal. They therefore weren't as comfortable discussing support, both because of the institutional nature of the workplace issue, and the fact that our research was being conducted at their workplace. In addition, the issue – the changing workplace – and the circumstances of the UM/Amherst workers are much more comfortable and privileged than those of the learners we talked with who are affected by welfare and immigration.

## The Need for Responsive Supports

The lives of many of the learners with whom we talked are complicated. They are sometimes complicated by the fact that supports in their lives are missing, inconsistent, unreliable, inappropriate and/or unresponsive to their needs. They are often further complicated by circumstances in their lives that are subject to change without warning. This is especially true for the welfare recipients participating in our study, most of who are female heads of household at various levels of literacy, English proficiency, and schooling. The lives of these women are lived close to the edge, with no financial safety net: one setback (either a support disappearing or a change in circumstances) can spell disaster.

The threat of imminent loss of supports or uncertainty about future sources of support causes fear and anxiety in learners. A survey conducted among learners who are welfare recipients indicates that for 41% "not knowing about the future" is a major stressor in their lives. Eighty-nine percent named "thinking about my children's future" and 57% "thinking about my welfare benefits running out" as major stressors in their lives. In an essay about being on welfare, a teen-aged mother studying in a G.E.D. program wrote this:

> "I wake up early in the morning and think about how can I get going – I get real stressed sometimes thinking about where me and my daughter will be in a few years from now [when our welfare benefits end]."

One of the obvious changes in circumstances for welfare recipients is the termination of their benefits under welfare reform. Many of the recipients with whom we spoke had to drop out of school when they reached their two-year time limit and their welfare benefits ended. Most of those still receiving welfare benefits either are having problems or anticipates having problems completing their education. The situation is a Catch 22: these parents who are supporting families on public assistance need education and skills to get a job that pays a living wage. But when benefits are cut they often don't have the financial resources to get the education and skills they need to get a job that will support them and their families. An adult learner with minimal literacy skills told us:

> "At this point, any crisis in the family is a potential make or break situation."
>
> *A welfare recipient*

> "It [welfare reform] affect me so bad, because right now, I have to drop out of school to find a job. My goal is to finish school and get my GED so I can start a nurse's aid training program. But I cannot be in school because I'm out there looking for a job. I have to finish up school, and get the GED before I start the nursing program."

Another woman put it this way:

> "At this moment, I'm coming to school and I'm still on welfare, but once I've been cut off from welfare, I'm not going to coming to school no more and I'll be losing a lot of opportunities here. Mentally it is hurting me and physically it is hurting me more."

The welfare recipients we know who were able to continue their education after losing benefits had strong personal supports. Several women moved in with a family member – a mother, sister, or aunt. One woman moved in with her aging mother to save rent, but is also a key support for her as a caretaker, and by managing the household. Another woman gave custody of her two children to their father because she no longer had the means for their support. She stayed in school and is hoping soon to pass her GED so she can get a job and get her children back.

For the newcomers we spoke with there was also a clear need for responsive supports. Many ESOL learners from the Center for New Americans spoke explicitly about how the kinds of support they need changes over time. They use the term "step-by-step" to describe the importance of beginning with simple tasks in a supportive atmosphere, and then moving progressively to more complicated work, perhaps work that takes a learner beyond the walls of the classroom. At CNA, for example, learners became deeply involved in a search for new classroom space; this brought them into contact with the community and afforded them the

opportunity to practice their English in a challenging situation while still being supported by their school. ILI learners, too, often alluded to this progression of needs and supports.

One of the initial supports for ESOL learners is, of course, to learn English. Once basic language is learned they can move on to learning about their new community and conducting daily activities in the community. This quote from one CNA learner clearly describes this step-by-step concept:

> "CNA help me to meet my goals about how important are English skills. Learn English is not just speak fluently, also you need to learn other skills like listening and comprehension... [We, the learners] visit different places – we use all English skills and after that, we usually write a journal about what do we see and how we feel. This kind of activities help me to get more vocabulary and to get information about the general services of the town."

As learners gain language ability they learn more about accessing new services and supports in their community. This enables them to meet their own need for independent action and to provide greater support to family and community. Parents, for example, are anxious to learn about the schools so they can speak with teachers and help children with homework. Learners then have more ability to maneuver in the community; they often need fewer or different kinds of support from when they arrived. In a spring 1999 survey of 47 CNA and ILI learners, for example, 51% of respondents said they needed someone to translate for them in their first six months in the U.S. But only 23% said they need someone to translate for them now. Six percent of respondents said they needed money from the U.S. government (welfare, food stamps) in their first six months, but none said they need it at the time of the survey. Forty-five percent needed help in their first six months to find a job, but this number dropped to 30% at the time of the survey. Interestingly, the job-seeking needs of the 26 CNA learners answering the survey changed little. During the first six months 39% needed help, and 35% still need this kind of assistance. These figures may reflect the shorter time CNA learners have lived in the U.S., and their lower level of English language acquisition.

An individual's immigration status also affects the step-by-step process, with different supports needed at different points in the process by different newcomers. When refugees arrive, for example, they are provided with support from private agencies and/or the U.S. government. (Refugees are exempt from the immigration reforms of 1996.) People skilled at assisting refugees aid them in tasks such as finding a place to live, enrolling in school, and finding a job. This support can last for up to two years. Reflecting on her needs upon arrival, a refugee from Russia said:

> "When I first came to America, I got welfare [money and food stamps]. At first my husband was sick, he had two operations. Now my husband works and we don't have welfare now. We were on welfare for two years and the welfare helped, help husband to find a job..."

Immigrants do not have access to the same set of formal supports as refugees. They often rely on friends and family when they first arrive in the U.S., and must identify and approach institutions such as day care facilities or a work place on their own. An immigrant from Taiwan described her experience:

> "I don't have a job and my husband did not gain much money [when we first came to U.S.] Also we don't have a car, was very difficult... I remember one time, when my son was sick and we don't know anything about 'Green Card' or immigration things. We don't have a medical plan and we had to pay to the hospital $720 per day. We don't know anything about hospital bills and we called my family in Taiwan to lend us some money. Was a hard time."

The data indicates that the situation is even more difficult and problematic for undocumented individuals. They face the risk of deportation and struggle with the fear and anxiety associated with that risk. Due to their status they are subject to exploitation by employers because they feel they have no recourse to complain about working conditions or pay. (They may actually have resources that they are unaware of.) Undocumented people must rely on personal supports as they are not eligible for most institutional supports.

Many individuals we talked with are in the process of becoming U.S. citizens. Successfully meeting the demands of the Immigration system requires a new kind of support. As described in the Immigration Context and Findings sections, changes in the citizenship process have created confusion for applicants. Support for this process comes from many places: one focus group participant described how CNA helped him to become a citizen. He also talked about how it helped to study in a group, like the CNA citizenship class. He said, "Gotta keep pushing," and recommended getting advice from people who know. He said, "Think positive." This is an example of support given and support received being seen as part of the same web of support that makes it possible for individuals to make meaningful strides towards achieving their goals, and some of the immigrants we talked with cited it as such.

In order to have the time and energy necessary to pursue their goals, both the welfare recipients and newcomers we talked with must be able to rely on responsive, consistent and sustained supports rather than having to constantly focus on survival and meeting basic needs.

## Getting and Giving Support to Others and its Connection to Independence

The data we collected in the Changes Project reveals that a significant strand of a web of support is the support an individual provides to others. This is significant because it directly confronts many of the prevailing myths about welfare recipients and newcomers. As adult learners talk about their lives, they describe the areas and people to whom they give support. Supporting others can help a learner sustain his/herself by enhancing motivation, a feeling of purpose, a sense of positive self-worth, and self-confidence. Giving support might include such activities as cooking meals for others, raising children and giving rides to neighbors. Learners also give support through helping peers with homework and personal problems, and by serving as mentors in the classroom: sharing their knowledge, experience and perspective with the larger group.

> "I think it [the Changes Project] has made me more aware of the issues that were kind of out there, but now I see really how they affect people's lives. And I see myself as part of that, that web of people. I'm committed to making our whole web stronger."
>
> *Research Team Member*

**Family as a Site for Giving Support**

Many of the learners with whom we spoke say that their children are a strong motivation for them to return to school and work toward completing their goals. Many learners, for example, told us they want to provide stable support for their children, be good role models, and help their children academically. (Over 80% of respondents to the welfare reform survey said they are in school to be a good role model for their children. Over 60% said that they are in school to help their children with homework.) They see getting an education for themselves as a way to achieve these goals.

We heard, from a woman in a literacy program, for example:

> "I came back to school so I can help my son James (who is fourteen) learn to read so he can meet his goal of being a cop."

Another woman we interviewed talked about how her desire to be a good role model and support for her son changed the way she thought about getting an education:

> "When I was younger, I kept running away from home. I wasn't kinda like comfortable living with my mom. So I decided to stop going to school. And then when I had my son and I kinda like started looking at my son and seeing that every time my son went to school and came home with a homework or something, he was gonna come to me and ask me to help him. I didn't want to tell my son I never went to school, you know. I want to be able to sit there and at least try to help him."

**Community as a Site for Giving Support**

The relationships individuals have within their communities are another place of giving support. In talking about community, people used terms such as "working together;" "people of different backgrounds teaching each other;" "a thousand million hands reaching out to help;" "respecting our elders, teachers, neighbors, family members and friends." Many participants we interviewed said that one of their goals for getting an education was the ability to "give something back" to their communities.

Some newcomers find that school becomes a meaningful place to build new relationships. Learners help each other practice and learn together. Learners give and receive; those who know more help those who are just beginning. One learner describes her school as a community:

> "Yes, CNA is like a community and that helps to learn. You talk with people, learn new vocabulary and maybe remember words you already learned. It is good practice hearing and listening to other people."

One immigrant from Russia mentioned the absence of community support. In describing the neighborhood in which he'd settled, he said:

> "Yes, maybe this area isn't the best for the first year for refugees or immigrants... maybe it could be better if we stayed in the area where there were more people from our origin, from Europe or Russia, but we had no choice at that time, when we left Russia."

Support is often an implied theme when people talk about problems in their community. For example, when a group of teen mothers was asked to brainstorm phrases they associate with the word "poverty," they said "[h]elping each other" and "taking care of your neighbors." The fact that these young women (all of who had grown up in poverty) connect the idea of poverty with helping each other stands in stark contrast to stereotypical images of welfare recipients as wholly dependent on the welfare system. They provide support to each other and this is a source of individual and community strength.

## Interdependence and Independence

Many people talked about community as an interdependent system: a significant source of support and an opportunity to provide support. The learners we heard from spoke appreciatively of support from friends or family members; they also articulated a desire to be

independent, to go about the activities of daily life without assistance. In an interview, a learner responded to a question about why she began to study at Center for New Americans by saying,

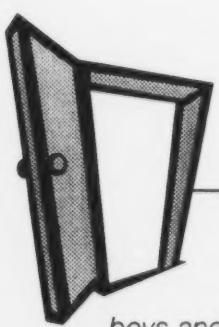
> "For two reasons, the first was for improve my English because when I have to go to the doctor or go to the supermarket or the store... for me was hard because my husband help me all the time, but now I go alone."

To gain this independence, this woman first needed the support of a school to learn language. Contrary to the popular messages that help from institutions and others leads to dependence, the right kind of support leads to independence. Independence then strengthens the learner so that s/he is a stronger source of support for another. A CNA learner who is in the process of becoming a citizen said:

> "Immigrants need our support and our help in order to become citizens... Because, when we come over here, we want to work. We want to do a lot of good things. So we are working, we are paying taxes, but if we don't have a job or we don't have education, we have to ask for help. And that will cost the government more money. But if they give us the opportunity to go to school and to learn stuff like we are doing right now, with the computer classes, I think that will help immigrants to have a better job and a better future. And it would be a lot of support for the United States."

Learners also spoke of the ways in which school fostered their independence by giving them both practical supports and inspiration. Underlying this, we still see the way learners are both interdependent and interconnected.

An adult in an adult basic education program had this to say about how skills gained from school were helping him to feel less dependent.



> "It really has helped me to solve problems, you know, how to write checks, how to do money orders, how to depend on my own, not depending on other people."

## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Karen Rivera**, a researcher for the RWN team. "I am a mother of four, three boys and a girl, ages nine to seventeen, that receives welfare. I am separated from my husband, but I have a partner who lives with me. I am a thirty-eight year old woman that goes to an adult literacy program. I've been attending the [RWN] program for seven years. Someday I'm hoping to get my GED – before my kids get theirs – which I doubt. I'm white, I'm born and raised in Springfield, MA, and English is my only language."*

Below, a woman who had to leave her adult literacy program (because of the two-year time limit) talks about her desire to came back to school. She clearly articulates how the school offered her the ability to become independent, to support herself.

> "My dream is getting back to the program. I would love coming back to the program, cause it helped me out so much. It taught me how to depend on myself. They helped me out with that. You know, don't be negative on yourself if you do not know how to read. Never say you can't do what you know you could do. That's what they teach me here, how to be on my own."

We focus our attention on the notion of support as both getting and giving because it both substantiates and raises questions about the meaning of independence that so many learners voiced as a goal. It is support that helps individuals to move toward their goal of independence. Yet, support includes being interconnected and interdependent.

Based on what we've learned in the Changes Project we believe that people with adequate personal supports and inadequate institutional supports are generally more able to stay in school than people with inadequate personal supports and adequate institutional supports. This may be because personal supports tend to be more flexible and responsive to changing needs than institutional supports. However, those with both strong institutional as well as personal supports are most likely to reach their goals. Having described the complexity of the web learners create, the next three sections describe the impact of the three issues on the lives of adult learners and their pursuit of their education goals.

## *The Impact of Welfare Reform*

### The Context

Welfare reform policies have created new barriers to educational attainment for many low-income adults in adult basic education programs and community colleges. Low-income adult learners often lack the basic life and educational supports that their middle class counterparts may take for granted. Many are supporting families as single parents, learning to speak English, or working to attain basic literacy skills. Many also have multiple problems associated with poverty which place further obstacles in the way of their educational achievement: homelessness, chronic unemployment, health problems and lack of access to adequate health care, domestic violence situations, and lack of transportation or quality child care for their children.

The two aspects of welfare reform that pose the greatest threat to educational access and attainment for welfare recipients and former recipients are 1) the time limit on benefits and 2) the work requirement, or "workfare". (Workfare requires welfare recipients with school-aged children to do paid or volunteer work in order to continue to receive cash benefits.) In this report you'll hear directly from Changes Project participants about the impact of these policies on their lives. In order to get a complete picture of how welfare policies affect adult learners it's also helpful to have a historical perspective on the evolution of public assistance, and to take a brief look at research conducted on the relationship between education and employability.

**The Evolution of Policy**

Public assistance, or welfare programs for poor families, came into being as part of the Social Security Act, passed by Congress in 1935, which also created social insurance programs such as Unemployment Insurance and Social Security. The Social Security Act of 1935, passed three to five decades after similar legislation in most other Western industrial nations, was based on the idea that the federal government should assume permanent responsibility for social welfare because "market economies rarely provide enough jobs or income for everyone." For this reason, it was felt that a safety net was needed for the poor in order to prevent social and economic chaos. (Abramovitz 1996, 16.)

The policies known collectively as "welfare reform" were instituted on a federal level as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), signed by President Clinton in 1996. This federal welfare law ended the safety net of AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) benefits for poor families by establishing a five-year lifetime limit on cash benefits and establishing a work requirement (either paid or volunteer work) for eligible families of between 20 and 30 hours a week. (The current federal term for the cash benefits program is Transitional Aid to Needy Families, or TANF.)

Massachusetts was one of nineteen states granted a waiver from this federal policy in order to implement its own reforms. In Massachusetts, welfare reform preceded the federal PRWORA with what is known as "Chapter 5," enacted in the fall of 1995 and fully implemented in December 1996. Chapter 5 is more severe in its restrictions on benefits than the federal policy, limiting cash benefits to eligible families to two years within a five-year period. Chapter 5 also includes a twenty-hour weekly work requirement for able-bodied welfare recipients whose youngest children are six years old and in school ("workfare"). The current term for the cash benefits program in Massachusetts is Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children or TAFDC. The state agency administering the public assistance program is the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), formerly known as the Department of Public Welfare.

**After Reform**

Between February 1996 and February 1999, the first three years welfare reform was instituted in Massachusetts, state welfare rolls dropped by 46.5%. Over six thousand Massachusetts families, including 8,400 children lost their benefits during this period (MLRI report, 1999). In Massachusetts, as in many other states, several studies report conflicting information about how families who have lost TAFDC benefits as a result of welfare reform are faring. In April of 1999 the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance released a report, "How Are They Doing," based on a longitudinal study of households leaving welfare. The study describes former welfare recipients' income levels and general well being.

The DTA report was based on data from 341 individuals interviewed within three months of losing their TAFDC benefits. It's important to note, however that after a year of lost benefits the number of respondents in the study dropped to 210. The majority of respondents in the DTA study were white, female, and English speaking. Forty percent of the respondents did not have a high school diploma or GED. Seventy-five percent of people interviewed in the first round stated that they were the same or better off financially since leaving TAFDC, and 60% of these respondents thought they were better off financially since losing their benefits. Eighty percent reported that at least one person in the household "had worked at some time since leaving TAFDC." At the time of their interviews, more than a third of the respondents were working full time (30 or more hours a week) making a median wage of $280 per week, while 71 respondents were working part time, making a median wage of $140 per week. By the fourth round of interviews, 83% of the 210 interviewed reported being the same or better off financially and 85% said their general well being had improved since leaving TAFDC.

Several reports issued at the same time as the DTA study offer a very different portrait of how post-welfare families are doing in the state. An article by Randy Albelda, an economist at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, critiques the DTA report:

> "The main philosophic principles of Massachusetts's welfare reform are "work first" and "any job is a good job." (The latter slogan appears prominently in DTA offices across the state.) Intuitively and empirically, we know the types of welfare policies passed in 1995 – short time limits, strict reporting and work rules, limited education and training opportunities – do provide a strong push for families receiving welfare to go off. The real question is, to what? This report finally provides some answers, but they are not the ones we were told we would get with welfare reform." (Albelda, 1999, p. 13.)

According to Albelda, only about one of four former recipients who responded to the DTA's survey were earning more than $250 a week twelve months after leaving welfare. Another

25% were earning wages below the poverty level, about 20% were back on welfare and not employed, while the remaining 30% were neither employed nor on welfare. Half of those employed were in low-wage occupations and industries that carry few, if any benefits. More than two out of five respondents did not receive health insurance through their jobs a year after leaving welfare.

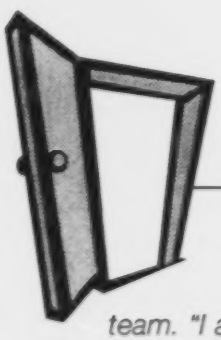
Despite the low earnings of most former recipients, Albelda states the Massachusetts legislature has refused to allow education and training to count as part of the work requirement, or workfare. They argue instead that welfare recipients should pursue education and training *after* they find jobs. "The findings in the DTA's report suggest that this argument is wrong," Albelda states:

> "A year after leaving welfare, only one out of every 10 (11.2 percent) respondents had participated in an education or training program in the three months prior to their interview. The most common reasons cited are that they had no time (36.5 percent), they couldn't afford it (24.7 percent), and they did not have child care (12.9 percent). Two-thirds said more education and training while on welfare would have been helpful." (Albelda, 1999, p. 13.)

**The Need for Educational Access**

It's clear that all welfare recipients need access to education and training and to be given the time they need to complete their educational goals. Educational access is especially crucial, however, for adults lacking basic literacy skills, who face much greater odds in finding and maintaining employment.

A 1999 report by the Educational Testing Service analyzed the employment prospects of welfare recipients with varying literacy levels. The report predicts that recipients with the highest skills will be able to find and keep good jobs, and that an increase in education and training for people in this category could yield substantial returns. For recipients with literacy skills that are minimal or basic, however, prospects for upward mobility are very limited. The report suggests that women with the lowest literacy skills may need up to 900 hours (more than two years) of coursework just to boost their skills to the next level. (Carnevale & Desrochers, 1999.)



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Sherry Russell**, the site research facilitator and a team member on the RWN team. "I am a thirty-five year old woman. I am from the United States, but have never lived in one particular place for more than a few years. I have been teaching – in various settings – for close to fifteen years, and have been involved in adult education for about ten years. I am currently also a graduate student (focusing on adult non-formal education). I am white, from a middle class background, and my native language is English."*

A 1999 research report released by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) evaluates the literacy and employment skill levels of adults receiving welfare benefits. This report also emphasizes the acute need of many current and former welfare recipients in the United States for basic skills training and education if they are to find and retain even the lowest skilled, lowest paying jobs. According to the NCSALL report, 35% of welfare recipients are at Level 1 literacy, the lowest of five categories of literacy levels, and 41 percent are at Level 2. At Level 1, individuals can do simple tasks like sign their names or total a bank deposit. People at Level 2 can use math and reading skills for common everyday tasks like filling out forms, deciphering charts and graphs, and reading comprehension. Adults at Levels 1 and 2 are not generally able to perform higher order tasks or to meet the literacy demands of everyday life and are at a severe disadvantage when it comes to getting and keeping jobs.

A report by the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute in Boston underscores these findings. They report that almost half of the welfare recipients in Massachusetts with minor children lack a high school diploma or GED. (MLRI, 1999.) U.S. Census figures from 1991 show that 24% of families in which the heads of household have not earned a high school diploma or GED live in poverty compared to only 2% of families headed by adults with a BA. A National Institute for Literacy report (NIL, 1999) states that nearly half of the adults in the United States with the lowest literacy levels live in poverty, compared to 4 – 8% of those with the two highest literacy levels. The report also states that teen pregnancy rates are higher among individuals with lower literacy skills and that three out of four food stamp recipients performed at the two lowest literacy levels.

National Priorities Project research suggests that people entering the job market in Massachusetts with few skills may indeed find jobs, but given the kinds of jobs available to them their chances of moving out of poverty are slim. Sixty-one percent of the jobs with the most growth in Massachusetts pay less than a livable wage (the minimum income required to meet a family's basic needs), while 42% of these jobs pay less than half of a livable wage. Studies by the Census Bureau and the National Governor's Association report that only 28.8% of former welfare recipients hold jobs that pay above the $14,500 poverty level for a family of three. (National Priorities Project Grassroots Factbook, December 1998.)

**Issues of Gender & Race**

These figures become even more dramatic when comparisons are made between the income levels of men and women. Women's earnings lag behind men's at all levels of educational attainment. In 1993 the average yearly earnings of women without a high school education was $15,400, while men with the same educational level earned an average of $21,800. Women with AA degrees earned an average yearly income of $25,800, while their male

counterparts earned $33,700. Women with BA degrees earned an average of $31,200 per year, more than twice the income of women who did not complete high school. Men with BA degrees earned an average of $42,000 per year. (Economic Policy Institute 1998.)

The gender gap in earnings is particularly salient to this study: currently the overwhelming majority of welfare recipients are female heads of household, and one out of three single mothers in the United States rely on public assistance, or welfare, to support their families (Albelda, 1999). These figures make clear that access to education and training is crucial for low-income women supporting families on public assistance. Without them a successful transition from welfare to work is highly unlikely.

National statistics also point to a racial dimension to poverty, one aspect of which is a disproportionate number of people of color living in poverty. African American women and Latinas are more likely to be poor, and to stay poor for longer periods of time, than white women are. In fact, with a 30% poverty rate (Dujon & Withorn, 1996) African American women and Latinas have three times the likelihood of being poor as whites (Albelda & Tilly, 1998). Because whites make up nearly three-quarters of the U.S. population, the largest group living in poverty today is white women and their children. But African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans are disproportionately poor: while 13% of whites, men and women, are poor, 36% of African Americans, 34% of Latinos and 17% of Asians are poor (Dujon & Withorn, 1996).

Massachusetts's data on families receiving welfare benefits are consistent with national figures on the poverty rates of different racial and ethnic groups. While the typical Massachusetts family receiving welfare benefits in 1998 was a white woman in her thirties with one or two children, 29% were Latino families and 18% were African American families (Kates, 1998). These data are important to the context of this study for many reasons, but particularly because African Americans and Latinos are over-represented in adult basic education programs in Massachusetts, and because Changes Project research team members and participants are racially and ethnically diverse.

In Massachusetts and across the nation a debate is raging about the reasons people live in poverty, lack employment, and rely on welfare. Two articles that appeared in the same edition of the Boston Globe (Wong, 1999 and Meckler, 1999) reflect the dimensions of this debate. Citing an Urban Institute study the Wong article predicts that because of a booming economy, the low-skill labor market in Boston would easily absorb the hundreds of former welfare recipients looking for jobs each year. Further, the article predicts that contrary to what some had feared, this influx of workers would not drive down wages or displace other workers. The Meckler article examines child poverty rates in the United States in the past

three years, and claims that, while welfare reform has done a fine job in moving people off welfare it has a dismal record of moving people, particularly children, out of poverty.

In Massachusetts, as in Washington, the official story is that welfare reform has been an unqualified success because of a dramatic drop in caseloads. Yet, opponents of welfare reform policies claim that it has driven the nation's poorest families deeper into poverty while removing a vital safety net for them. (Emery, 1999). We hope that by giving readers an in-depth and personal look at the impact of welfare reform on participants in the Changes Project, they will gain a more complete picture of this complex issue.

## Welfare Reform Findings

During the course of our research we collected data from adult learners in various settings, including a community college, adult literacy programs and a GED program for teen parents. Our participants come from many walks of life: a wide variety of age groups, ethnicities, geographic locations, and language groups. Some are parents and grandparents, others are not, but all have two characteristics in common: they are welfare recipients and they are adult learners enrolled in education programs. In addition, all of those who participated in the research on welfare reform are women, and the majority is single parents. This is not surprising: welfare reform has had a far greater impact on women and children than on any other group. It is easy to forget that children are welfare recipients too, and as such are affected directly by changes in welfare policy. [2]Among the welfare recipients who participated in the Changes Project, all are supporting children, and most are single mothers. The findings listed below reflect common themes found in the data across all of the groups described above. They represent responses we heard again and again in the interview and focus group transcripts, survey results, and the writing we collected. We include representative quotes from the data in order to illuminate each finding, and to highlight the stories that form the heart of this work.

Our findings address the effects of the new welfare legislation, some of which present enormous difficulties for our participants. The specific policies people talk about most – those that have the greatest impact – are the two-year time limit on benefits; the work requirement, which requires people with school-aged children to perform either volunteer or paid work for twenty hours a week; and the Family Cap Law, which denies welfare benefits to any children born after the two-year time limit has been applied to their parent's case.

> Our findings paint a stark picture of the effects of welfare reform on the participants in this study, and we want to represent the data as accurately as possible. We do not, however, want to portray the participants as victims, even though they've sometimes been victimized by the "one-size-fits-all" policies of welfare reform.

[1]In 1996, 68% of welfare recipients in the United States were children (National Priorities Project, 1996). Nationally, one out of every five children lives in poverty, and the number of children living in extreme poverty has increased since welfare reform was instituted (Edelman, 1999). In Massachusetts, among a sample of 704 families receiving TAFDC benefits in 1998, 1,424 of those recipients were children (Kates, 1998).

Our findings paint a stark picture of the effects of welfare reform on the participants in this study, and we want to represent the data as accurately as possible. We do not, however, want to portray the participants as victims, even though they've sometimes been victimized by the "one-size-fits-all" policies of welfare reform. Nor do the women with whom we spoke resemble the false stereotype of the welfare recipient as someone who is "lazy" and "takes advantage of the system." The women who shared their stories with us are strong, resourceful, resilient, courageous, and hard working. They have a deep desire to be independent, and to support and raise healthy families. The resilience of many of our participants has been greatly challenged by welfare reform. Despite this, people continue to find ways to strive toward their goals, care for their families, and keep their dreams of a better future alive. We hope these findings are read with this in mind.

Although our findings focus mainly on the ways welfare reform policies affect peoples' lives, it's important to note that those lives are complex, multi-dimensional, and constantly changing – as are the contexts within which people live. Thus, we hope that the six findings that follow, and the stories and quotes chosen to illuminate them, will offer a glimpse of the richness and variety of our participants' lives and experiences, their strengths as well as their struggles.

***Adult learners who are welfare recipients have problems meeting their educational goals.***

The majority of the adult learners we talked to say welfare reform makes it difficult for them to remain in school. People cited the two-year time limit on benefits and the work requirement as creating the greatest barriers to their educational achievement. For many, the time limit means that their family's welfare benefits will run out before they are able to finish school. We spoke with a woman enrolled in an adult literacy program, for example, who had to drop out of school when she reached her two-year time limit and lost her welfare benefits. She hoped eventually to pass her GED and get a job that provided enough income to support her family. When she began the literacy program, she could barely read or write. By the time she left she told us how proud she was that she could read and write at a fourth grade level. This learner saw the program as her route to independence – to being able to support herself and her family without having to depend on the public welfare system.

> "I'm not coming to school anymore, and the reason is because of the welfare reform that's going on. It's not easy, especially for a mom with two kids. What this did to us, what it did, our dreams just went down the toilet. No jobs out there, you don't got a high school diploma... and this is what the social workers do not see. When I hear 'welfare reform' it makes me mad. There were so many dreams I had when I was in school. But now I'm not in the program no more, and my dreams went by fast."

Another woman with whom we spoke, also enrolled in an adult literacy program, had this to say about the effects of welfare reform on her educational goals:

> "It [welfare reform] affect me so bad, because right now I have to drop out of school to find a job. My goal is to finish school and get my GED so I can start a nurse's aid training program. But I cannot be in school because I'm out there looking for a job. I have to finish up school, and get the GED before I start the nursing program."

The woman quoted above eventually did find a job in a factory sorting greeting cards. Every morning a neighbor helped take her children to school and daycare. But the woman was fired from her new job after several weeks because her inadequate literacy and numeracy skills made it difficult for her to do the work accurately and at the required pace. This experience left her feeling very discouraged about her prospect of finding and keeping a job: "How can I get a job, when I don't even have the skills that I need?"

This woman could not return to school because she needed to find a way to support herself and her children. Without school, however, she feared she would never gain the skills necessary to work. In the meantime she was deeply afraid, not knowing how she could ensure her family's survival: "Sometimes I don't know what to say to my landlord. I don't know how I will be able to have a roof over my head for me and my kids." Again and again she told us, as did many of the women with whom we spoke: "We need more time in school." "I'm a strong mother," she said, "I'll go out there and get a job, but I need to finish up school and get my GED [first]. Then I can leave welfare and go straight to work to support my kids. I always want to be an independent mother, you know?"

The time limit policy has meant that many of our participants have had to drastically revise their educational goals, including deferring plans for post-secondary education. As a teen parent in a GED program told us: "I am afraid to start college because by the time I am ready I will have started my time clock. So they expect us to live in a nasty apartment, be poor, and live in a bad environment, but still do good in school and be a parent."

In fact, community colleges across Massachusetts have seen dramatic declines in the number of welfare recipients among their learner bodies. Within a year after the 1996 welfare reform bill passed, the community college where one of our research sites is based saw a 44% drop in the number of welfare recipients. (Coelen, 1993.)

> "I'm not coming to school anymore, and the reason is because of the welfare reform that's going on. It's not easy, especially for a mom with two kids. What this did to us, what it did, our dreams just went down the toilet. No jobs out there, you don't got a high school diploma... and this is what the social workers do not see. When I hear 'welfare reform' it makes me mad. There were so many dreams I had when I was in school. But now I'm not in the program no more, and my dreams went by fast."
>
> *A welfare recipient*

As one teen parent enrolled in a GED program summed it up:

> "I feel that welfare reform is making lots of women with children change our minds about what we want for our futures. The time limit is forcing us to do things we don't want to do, to give up our goals. We need support from welfare. We need to hear that we have some power and that welfare will stand by us so we can move on with our lives."

Other participants in this study told us that the work requirement, also known as "workfare," posed the greatest threat to their educational attainment. The workfare requirement of the current Massachusetts law requires welfare recipients with school-aged children to perform twenty hours a week of paid or volunteer work in order to continue to receive cash benefits. Those who are in school must meet this requirement, even if it interferes with their schooling. As one woman said: "We work for twenty hours for free and no school? What kind of help is that?" Many of the women we talked to had to drop out of school in order to take low-wage jobs or work as volunteers in compliance with the workfare policy. In addition, none of those with whom we spoke reported that these jobs provided them with useful job training or job skills they could apply to getting and keeping a living wage job.

As the stories above clearly show, current welfare reform policies, specifically the time-limit and the work requirement, present severe challenges to educational attainment for low-income adults who rely on public assistance to support themselves and their families. Based on interviews and surveys we conducted with welfare recipients, we know many adult learners are forced to drop out of school as a result.

***Welfare recipients facing the time limit are less likely to become self-sufficient and support their families than before welfare reform was instituted.***

Two years is not enough time for many adults to acquire the education or training they need to become self-sufficient. This is particularly true for the adult learners in our study, all of whom are enrolled in or graduates of adult basic education programs. Because of policies like the time limit and workfare, many recipients are caught in a paradoxical situation that often has dire consequences. We have seen these policies force many learners to drop out of school (the very thing that is giving them the skills they need to earn a decent living) and go to work in a low-wage or dead-end volunteer job or be unable to find a job. One participant – a community college student – articulated this paradox clearly:

> "They don't give [people] a chance to be self-sufficient before they get off. They're giving them the beginning, they're letting them take the first step to becoming self-

> sufficient, but once they start actually walking, step after step, they cut them right off in the middle. They give you the two years... and then they cut you off just before you graduate. What are you supposed to do then?... Who are they really helping by having those rules?... Nobody... They need to let these people become totally self-sufficient and never go back on [welfare]. And help the next generation."

Another community college learner, in many ways representative of the welfare recipients in this study, is the sole provider for her two children, a full time college learner and, in compliance with the new workfare requirements, works as volunteer for twenty hours a week. She volunteers as a mentor and worked as a researcher for the Changes Project. This learner dropped out of high school ten years ago then went on to earn a GED. She decided to go to college when her children reached school age because she wanted "to be a good role model" and provide her children with "a secure future." She spent her first year in college taking developmental level courses to prepare her for college level work that would earn her credits toward an associate's degree.

Now in her fifth semester, this learner hopes to earn her degree by the end of the academic year, though her benefits are due to end before then. More than half of the students at her community college starts out taking developmental level courses, and the majority of students take longer than two years to earn an associate's degree. She put it this way: "You only have two years. It's not enough time to get the education you need. People depend on welfare so they can get their education, so they can get more money later on in life, so they can put back to their community what they have borrowed in the years they were going to school."

Another community college student – a welfare recipient facing a ticking clock – spoke almost no English when she first enrolled at the college. Now, after working "day and night" for three semesters, she has completed five levels of ESOL classes and is ready to take "mainstream" courses that carry college level credit toward a degree. She spoke to us about her fear and uncertainty about the very near future, a time when welfare will no longer support her efforts to earn a degree:

> "I think about welfare. They help me out for a long time. They help me with my kids and now they are helping me so I can come to school. But I'm a little bit scared that my time come up and I'm not finished doing what I'm doing. I'm scared about that. Because they didn't give me enough time so I could be on welfare. I only have a year and that's not going to be enough time for me."

A learner working on basic literacy skills in an adult basic education program echoes the same refrain as the community college students quoted above. "We need time, time in school,

enough time. We need time to not feel rushed with school, so we can feel we're succeeding, not failing. We need enough time in school to get the skills we need, not only to get a job, but to keep it." Although people's educational needs may vary a great deal, *everyone* needs sufficient time to complete their goals.

"I feel that welfare reform is making lots of women with children change our minds about what we want for our futures. The time limit is forcing us to do things we don't want to do, to give up our goals. We need support from welfare. We need to hear that we have some power and that welfare will stand by us so we can move on with our lives."

*A welfare recipient*

The two-year time limit not only threatens learners' abilities to become independent and raise healthy families. It also challenges people's capacities – as individuals, families, and communities – to break the cycle of poverty from one generation to the next.

***The kinds of support and the amount of time low-income learners need in order to complete their educational goals vary widely. Welfare reform policies do not take these differences into account.***

Many people told us that the lack of appropriate and sufficient supports made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to stay in school. In theory, welfare reform instituted supports were designed to help people move from welfare to work. In practice, however, while many of these supports benefit some people they actually create barriers for others. One example is the Structured Job Search Program, a twenty-hour a week program designed to help people acquire skills and information they need to find and apply for jobs. This program may be an important support for some. For the woman quoted below, however, the Structured Job Search Program created a barrier. She was mandated to attend the job search program for twenty hours a week in order to keep her welfare benefits. In order to do so she had to drop out of the literacy program in which she was enrolled. Now she can't gain the literacy skills she needs in order to find the kind of employment that leads to self-sufficiency.

> "I'm not really getting nothing out of [the Structured Job Search Program]. We look in the paper... for what job you want and call up and they gotta make an appointment and go and do an application. Sometimes it's embarrass for me to go to a place and do the application. I don't really got a full understanding of the application, you know, so that really bothers me a lot. I should still be in school to get my education, then I could get a proper job."

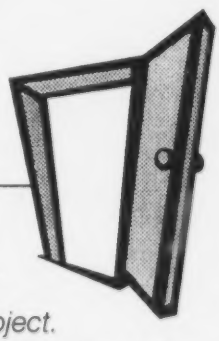
Low-income adult learners often lack the basic life and educational supports their middle class counterparts take for granted. Many low-income adults support families as single parents, are learning to speak English, or working to acquire basic literacy skills. Many also have multiple problems associated with poverty: homelessness, chronic unemployment, health problems

and lack of access to adequate health care, and lack of transportation or quality child care. These conditions place further obstacles in the way of their educational achievement.

Participants talked about the struggle to keep their children healthy and fed, help them to do well in school, and their desire to give them a better life. For many single parents who are welfare recipients, particularly parents who don't know how to read and write or don't have skills to get a living wage job, the two-year time limit and work requirement jeopardize their ability to be self sufficient and provide a stable life for their children.

"Instead of [requiring us to do] community service," one welfare recipient we interviewed told us, "they should... ask: what are *your* needs? And try to help you meet them. Ask, for example, do you need school?" Another learner struggling to balance the responsibilities of parenting with full-time school and a twenty-hour-a-week volunteer job, told us: "The work requirement doesn't help people get ahead. It makes it harder to meet your goals." And another learner voiced her frustration about having to work as a volunteer, while her own children stayed home with a baby-sitter: "Why do community service [the work requirement] when it means you have to pay someone else to watch your kids?"

The basic assumption underlying welfare reform appears to be that the playing field is level for all welfare recipients. It assumes they start out at the same educational, literacy and English language acquisition level, with the same kinds of supports in place, and, thus, should benefit equally from what welfare offers. However, as is clear from the many examples above, people's lives are affected by varying circumstances. Consequently, people have very different needs. The "one size fits all" premise of current welfare reform policies ignores these critical differences.



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Alicia Robert**, a Mentor Program team researcher, is the mother of two daughters, one of whom was born during her stint with the Changes Project. Alicia is in her mid-twenties, is biracial (African American and white), and speaks English and some Spanish. She graduated from Holyoke Community College in May 1999 and plans to continue at a four-year college. After graduating, Alicia worked as an ESOL teacher and a health care worker. "The most important thing I learned about myself [in the Changes Project] is my capability to utilize and comprehend things I am not familiar with or thought were beyond me. I have learned that a lot of people have the desire to learn more but are not given the opportunity to advance at the pace they need due to welfare reform. They don't have the information about where to go so they feel stuck and may be afraid to ask."*

***Welfare reform causes acute emotional stress, on a daily basis, for recipients and their children. This stress contributes to the difficulty recipients face in trying to complete their educational goals.***

The sense of uncertainty and fear about the future, constantly changing welfare regulations, the burdensome bureaucratic tangle in which recipients are caught, the ticking clock of a time limit looming on the near horizon, and the lack of appropriate and adequate supports to help people make the transition from welfare to work, cause many recipients a tremendous amount of daily emotional stress. The following is from a woman who was nearing her time limit, but still did not have viable means for supporting her family once her benefits stopped. It offers a vivid snapshot of how the emotional and physical stress of dealing with the new regulations affect children as well as their parents:

> Last night I was talking to my daughter. I said, "Honey, there's going to be a lot of changes here now."
>
> She said, "What do you mean, Ma?"
>
> "Well, Mommy pretty soon is going to be cut off."
>
> "That means they're not going to give you no more money?"
>
> I'm like, "No,"
>
> And she said, "But Ma, how you going to get a job if you don't know how to read and write?"
>
> She's ten.

When asked to describe the daily experience of being on welfare, a community college student who recently lost her benefits told us:

> "Being on welfare is like a roller coaster ride: there are lots of ups and downs; you're moving really fast and you're scared; you're full of anxiety; you're confused; you can't see what's ahead of you and that makes you feel very insecure; and you are so caught up in these frightening emotions that you can't think straight. It takes so much of your energy that you can't do the important things you need to do, like being a good parent and doing your schoolwork."

The amount of fear and stress that people face once their clock starts ticking often makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their education. Often we heard, "I'm afraid." We heard many people ask: "What's going to happen to us?" The mother of a child with asthma wondered: "How will I support my daughter's hospital bills when she is sick if I don't have Medicaid? I'm afraid of my children being taken away."

The welfare recipients we surveyed listed the following situations as causing them the greatest stress in their daily lives: not having enough money (76% of respondents); paying bills (59% of respondents); thinking about their children's health (44% of respondents), safety (65% of respondents), and future (68% of respondents); completing their education (52% of respondents); going to welfare appointments (16% of respondents); and not knowing about the future (34% of respondents). As these data suggest, being on welfare, particularly since the advent of welfare reform, makes recipients' everyday life increasingly stressful. Although the long-term toll of this stress has not been documented, we suspect that it impairs peoples' ability to stay in school, to work, to care for their families, and to make important decisions about the future.

***Adult learners who are welfare recipients are often forced to place the demands of complying with welfare regulations before the needs of their families and their educational goals.***

Because welfare benefits may be essential to keeping a family intact, recipients must make compliance their first priority. Among the people we talked to, that might mean missing classes and getting behind in schoolwork because a recipient has to appear for a welfare appointment. Or it may mean that a welfare recipient has to perform volunteer work instead of learning to read and write, or she must work at a low-paying job rather than work toward a GED or a college degree. Compliance means meeting all the requirements of welfare reform, or risking the loss of benefits, a very real threat in Massachusetts. The following quote from one of the participants reflects a reality we heard expressed many times: "If I lost benefits, I would stay in the street. I would not have money to pay rent, would not have food."

Like many we talked to, another woman we interviewed had no back-up support to rely on beyond her welfare benefits:

> "I have no support to fall back on. I would be homeless if I got cut off. I'm afraid of my children being take away. My nerves, my emotions, are affected by welfare reform. It's hard to keep going, to keep a positive attitude. Welfare reform has so many requirements, to juggle these, and take care of the kids, and maintain 75% attendance at school, it's a struggle. Welfare reform is rigid. You make a little mistake and it's over."

Another welfare recipient, who wanted to stay in school to acquire the literacy skills necessary to make a living wage, was forced to sacrifice the custody of her children to their father. Her story highlights the sometimes desperate choices people face who need to get an

education in order to survive, but lack the support necessary to keep their families intact while they pursue education:

> "I had to give my kids to their father to take care of because of the two-year limit. My kids are affected. They don't understand, especially the little ones, why they have to go to live with their father. They're attached to their mother. It's hard on families. Two years is not enough! They'll cut you off even if you didn't meet your goals. Kids will suffer. Welfare reform hurts women who have children most. There's more prostitution, and half of my girlfriends have had to move in with their families, or face homelessness. Being cut-off made me feel more dependent, less self-sufficient. I have no ability to take care of my kids."

Adult learners who are welfare recipients must respond to the demands of welfare reform first, even it means placing their families, as well as their educational goals, at risk.

***Too often, welfare recipients do not receive the kind of current and accurate information they need to help them make important life decisions.***

One of the most serious problems adult learners face with the current welfare system is the lack of information they are given by their caseworkers about their rights and responsibilities as recipients and about resources available to them as current or former recipients. We have found that important information is often withheld from welfare clients, not known to the caseworker, or not made available to recipients who need English language translation or who lack the ability to read and write. Recipients also receive misinformation about their status, about key supports upon which they rely and/or are given different information at each visit. Not only does this increase stress, but on a very concrete level, it can threaten survival.

A community college student we interviewed told us:

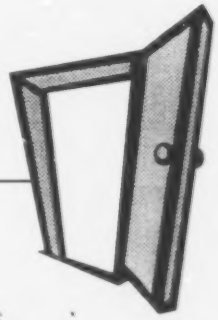
> "As recipients, we don't know what our rights are. It's our income, it's what we're budgeting off and we don't even know what we're entitled to get. Our lives revolve around welfare and we don't even know what we need to know. We should know the same information as the caseworkers. They have the easy part – just giving out information. We have to live by it."

Another community college student, currently working as a welfare rights advocate, shared some of her knowledge about surviving as a low-income learner, a parent, and a welfare recipient. The most important thing she learned to do is ask questions, and keep asking them until she gets the information she needs:

"Welfare recipients need to be informed about things like the clothing allowance, transportation reimbursements, the right to appeal and what will happen to your case if you do go through the appeal process. We need to know about the sanctioning process, the ins and outs. They should also give us information about community resources, like sliding-scale day care programs, scholarships for school, food banks, but they usually don't give us this information. The only reason I know what I know is because I ask questions all the time. I talk to my friends or to legal services people. I challenge my worker on everything and I stay on top of things."

In addition to the above quotes from community college students, participants in an adult literacy program corroborated this finding through numerous accounts and observations. A site research facilitator for this project, for example, accompanied a learner from an adult literacy program to an appointment with her caseworker. The researcher observed first hand the immense difficulty this particular client had in obtaining information about her case. The client was told 1) her file had been lost in the transfer from her last caseworker; 2) her request for a new Medicaid card had never been sent out; 3) the information she was given regarding the amount of time she had remaining to receive welfare benefits was erroneous; and 4) the school attendance form, which the client had dutifully sent to her previous caseworker, had been mis-filed. To add insult to injury, the caseworker criticized the client, to her face, for what she called her "inadequate" English proficiency.

In a focus group with welfare recipients who are learners in a GED program for teen mothers, the participants categorized "information about welfare, about your rights and the resources available to you as welfare recipients" as a vital support necessary for survival. These young mothers know what they are talking about. Current, timely, and correct information about one's welfare benefits, rights, and responsibilities is a vital support. Such information can help to put food on the table, pay the rent, find a good pediatrician, or a free ESOL class. Information is necessary to help people make important life decisions, and welfare recipients, like anyone else, have a right to receive information about welfare that will help them make the best decisions for themselves and the families they are supporting.



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Blanca Dominguez**, a researcher for the ILI team, is from Colombia. She is married, in her twenties and has a 3-year-old son. Blanca has lived in the U.S. for almost 4 years. She has a Marketing Degree from a school in Colombia and wants to get a Master's Degree in Education. Her native language is Spanish. She was involved in the Changes Project from the beginning.*

## *The Impact of Immigration Reform*

### The Context

Immigration law has undergone many changes since its inception in the 1700s, when the first naturalization and sedition laws were passed. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is the section of the U.S. Department of Justice that regulates visits and immigration by people from outside the U.S. The INS classifies people according to how they enter the country. Immigrants are people from another country who are admitted by the U.S. government, and allowed to live in the U.S. as Legal Permanent Residents. After three to five years, immigrants are eligible to apply for citizenship. Refugees are people who are allowed to enter the U.S. because they are unable or unwilling to return to their country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on such factors as race, religion, or political opinion. After one year in the United States, refugees can adjust their status to become Legal Permanent Residents. The Undocumented – also negatively described as illegal aliens – are those living in the United States without permission of the U.S. government. Most undocumented people enter the country legally, but become illegal when they overstay their tourist, student, or business visa. Throughout this report the terms immigrant and refugee refer to all those who are citizens of other countries who come to the United States. Newcomer is a broader term that also includes U.S. born Puerto Ricans.

More recently, immigration reform's complex policies, requirements, and fees have made it difficult for immigrants and refugees to understand their rights and responsibilities. You will read more about how immigration reform affects adult learners in the Immigration Reform Findings section of the report. For now, we'd like to review the changes in the laws and policies.

#### Immigration Laws 1990-1996

This century has seen numerous legislative acts that regulate immigration, created requirements for naturalization, or address benefits for immigrants. Often these acts were developed in reaction to changing rates and compositions of waves of immigration. In the early decades of the century, particularly in Massachusetts for example, the largely Northern European base of immigrants shifted to immigrants from the Eastern and Southern European countries. This change in ethnic composition gave rise to political movements to restrict immigration. In Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge headed the Immigration Restriction League's lobbying work to restrict immigration and enact a literacy test for immigrants. In 1921 and 1924 legislation created quota systems which reduced the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. from Eastern and Southern Europe and continued the exclusions of most Asians immigrants. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act continued the quota system and added a requirement for citizenship: the ability to read and write as well as speak and understand

English. These quotas remained in place until 1965 when the U.S. eliminated racial criteria, and each country, regardless of ethnicity, started to receive an annual quota. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act altered that system completely when it provided amnesty to millions of undocumented residents.

The laws instituted on the national level have had an impact on the composition of Massachusetts' population. According to a study of the changing workforce conducted by MassINC (1997) large waves of immigrants at the beginning of the century began to shrink in the 20s and 30s, reaching a low of 8.7% of the state's population in the 1970s. Since the 1980s the foreign born population has slowly increased, reaching 11.6% in the 1990s. In fact, if not for the arrival of immigrants, Massachusetts' population would actually be smaller today than it was in the 1970s. Although still a small percentage of population, immigrants have played an important role in maintaining the state's population and labor pool. From the 1980s to 1997, foreign-born individuals were responsible for 82% of the net growth of the state's civilian labor force. Again, according to the MassINC study these individuals hail from diverse racial backgrounds: 1996-97 statistics using four race-ethnic groupings show a composition of White (not Hispanic) 48%; Black (not Hispanic) 10%; Hispanic 25% and Asian and Other 16%. Massachusetts ranks 7th in the percentage of foreign-born population, and has the fastest growing immigrant population in the nation.

**The Impact of 1996 Immigration Reform Legislation**

In 1996 the focus of immigration legislation changed when President Clinton signed into law federal legislation on welfare and immigration. These laws restrict access to social programs and increase the complexity of immigration rules. Some examples of new legislation affecting immigrants when it was passed in 1996 are:

- Immigrants who had been eligible for federal food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are denied these benefits.
- For their first five years in the U.S. immigrants may no longer receive federal welfare benefits.
- Immigrants wanting to sponsor a family member to come to the U.S. must earn 125% of the poverty level and sign a legal document saying they will support their relative. This document remains in effect until the relative becomes a citizen or has worked 40 quarters (equal to 10 years) in the U.S. Prior to immigration reform this kind of legally binding document was not required; Immigration officials could only request that a relative sign an optional form to show support would be available if the immigrant fell on hard times.
- Border and deportation enforcement has been toughened.
- Opportunities for undocumented immigrants to adjust their legal status have decreased.

A few exceptions to these changes exist. For the most part, they are exemptions related to a person's immigration status:

- Immigrants who have worked 40 quarters (equivalent to 10 years) are still eligible for benefits.
- Refugees are exempt from immigration reform legislation and may receive benefits.

In response to these changes at the Federal level, Massachusetts legislators stepped in to restore some benefits and ensure a safety net for immigrants. Examples of programs developed in response to immigration reform include:

- All elderly and disabled immigrants cut from SSI because of immigration status are eligible for state-funded cash assistance.
- All legal immigrants ineligible for food stamps or welfare benefits because of their immigration status or entrance into the country after the enactment of immigration reform are eligible for state food stamps or cash assistance.
- All legal immigrants ineligible for federal Medicaid (MassHealth Standard) because of immigration status or entrance into the country after the enactment of immigration reform are eligible for medical assistance (MassHealth Basic).

In recognition of the dramatic impact of immigration reform, changes to the 1996 laws have also been made on the federal level. Some benefits have been partially restored:

- In June 1998 President Clinton signed legislation that restored federal food stamps to some legal immigrants, including most children and disabled immigrants and many elderly immigrants. The restoration is limited; food stamps were restored to slightly less than one out of every three legal immigrants who lost this benefit in 1996. Immigrants who arrived in the U.S. after August 22, 1996 still cannot get federal food stamps.
- In 1997 and 1998 legislation was passed to restore Supplementary Security Income to elderly and disabled immigrants who were receiving benefits before the passage of the 1996 welfare law.

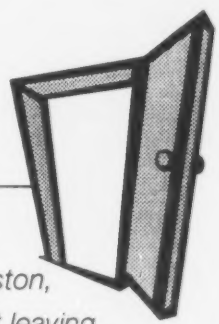
**Change = Confusion**

If you find the changes to Immigration policy confusing, you are not alone. Confusion, concern, and taking action to secure their rights and benefits were some of the reactions of immigrants to these changes. Immigrants and refugees nation-wide and in Massachusetts reacted in two notable ways: 1) They joined the ranks of citizenship seekers in record numbers; and 2) they turned away from using even those benefits which they are eligible to receive.

At the Boston District office of the INS, for example, applications increased markedly in the mid-1990s. In 1994, for example, approximately 22,000 people applied for citizenship while in 1995 that number grew to over 35,000. Following the enactment of immigration reform, 1997 applicants jumped to nearly the 50,000 level. Despite the increased number of applications, the number of citizenship approvals actually has declined nationwide. Citizenship denials rose by 251% during the first half of fiscal year 1999 compared to the same period during fiscal year 1998. INS officials attribute the growing number of rejections to administrative problems within their backlogged system. (McDonnell, 1999.)

As citizenship applications increased, so too did fees. The fee for a citizenship application has gone from $95 to $225 and the fee for a Permanent Legal Resident card has increased from $130 to $220. The application process for citizenship has also changed. Prior to August 1998, applicants could complete a written test on U.S. history and government. Today citizenship seekers must complete this test verbally at their final interview at an INS office. In addition, immigrants experience long waits for decisions on their applications, and there are few mechanisms for checking on the status of an application.

Desire for citizenship also fuels the fear of taking public benefits; even benefits for which an immigrant may be eligible and in need. Immigration law state that a person can be denied entry to the U.S. or permanent residency if the INS determines they are likely to become a "public charge," that is to become dependent for support on the government. With the 1996 changes in requirements for sponsoring immigrants, the applicant's financial ability and the



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

*"I am **Carolyn Cushing**. I was born in the United Sates, near Boston, Massachusetts. Growing up I listened to my Nan and Grampa tell stories about leaving Ireland and growing up immigrant in Cambridge.*

*I have worked as an administrator, trainer, and educator in non-profit-ABE and community college settings for the past ten years. I believe that participatory research is an important educational tool because it combines investigation, reflection, and action to create change. This education-in-action is a perfect blend to help people achieve their goals and to improve our communities and society.*

*People say I am organized, hard working and friendly and that I am adventuresome in my eating habits."*

*Carolyn Cushing served as the Site Research Facilitator for the Center for New Americans team. She is a native speaker of English and also speaks Spanish. She also works as CNA's Fundraising Coordinator.*

financial ability of the sponsor are taken into account when judging the fiscal eligibility of an immigrant. This has made it more of a financial difficulty to sponsor family members to come to the U.S. (McDonnell, 1999.)

For immigrants and those who serve them, there has also been confusion around what benefits would count for labeling a person as a public charge. Legally, a distinction exists between receiving cash benefits (welfare) and non-cash benefits (health care, for example), but this distinction has not been clearly articulated. Consequently even immigrants in need did not seek benefits for themselves or their children, fearing it would jeopardize their chance of becoming a citizen. Recently, the language around public benefits has been clarified so that immigrants will know that use of health services, WIC, housing, and other non-cash benefits will not affect being labeled a public charge.

These are the challenges faced by adult learners at the Center for New Americans and International Language Institute. Due to their differing circumstances, not all learners are affected in the same way. Both institutions serve a mixture of immigrants and refugees, as well as Puerto Rican born U.S. citizens. Although Puerto Ricans do not face challenges around their legal status in the U.S., they share many of the immigrants' or refugees' difficulties of learning a new language and finding a job in a new culture. Puerto Ricans facing financial difficulties and in need of public support are affected by state and national welfare reform just like any other U.S. citizen (See also the section Impact of Welfare Reform).

Despite their differences, almost all newcomers to the U.S. are affected by the recent changes in Immigration law. Even if they do not have a problem of their own, they feel its impact; hearing about problems their classmates face, newcomers live with confusion, uncertainty and insecurity about their future.

## Immigration Reform Findings

Our findings about immigration reform grow out of conversations and input from 158 immigrants and refugees living in Hampshire and Franklin Counties in Massachusetts. The Changes Project researchers are themselves newcomers, and the research teams began their investigation by reflecting on what they already know about immigration and identifying what they wanted to know more about. At the CNA site, researchers initially focused on hearing about people's reasons for coming to the United States, experiences as an immigrant, knowledge of immigration reform legislation, and goals around immigration status. Early questions at ILI focused around similar topics and immigrant rights and changes in legislation. As researchers listened to their peers and lived their own lives as immigrants, new themes emerged.

Immigrants talked little about the specifics of how the 1996 immigration laws impacted their daily lives, but they talked a great deal about their interactions and problems with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Researchers began to dig more deeply into this issue because it was and remains very important to them and their peers. The findings listed below reflect common themes found in the data across all of the groups we talked with. They represent responses we heard in the interview and focus group transcripts and survey results. We include representative quotes from the data in order to illuminate each finding, and to highlight the stories that form the heart of this work.

The researchers worked with individuals that represent incredibly diverse backgrounds and perspectives. They come from Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. The majority of CNA learners have elementary, secondary or even higher education from their home countries, although there are always a number of learners in any given class cycle who are working on native language as well as English language literacy. ILI learners are literate in their native languages with varying degrees of education ranging from elementary school to higher education. Some learners from both programs arrived very recently while others have lived in this country for years or even decades, but the average time people have lived in the United States is two to four years. Many of the newcomers are members of a family with children; others come alone to the United States and live with friends, co-workers, or fellow learners. The majority of people from whom we received input at CNA are women, as is the overall learner population; at ILI we received input from a more evenly split population, with just a few more women than men represented. Some learners arrive having studied or learned a little English while others arrive without any knowledge of English. The learners at CNA and ILI range in English language level from beginner to advanced intermediate. Because it was difficult to have direct conversations with beginning level learners, researchers asked more advanced learners to think back to their first experiences in the United States, and the experience of beginners is represented in this way.

Whatever their reasons for coming, immigrants and refugees arrive with hopes and dreams and work to achieve them. As they settle into the United States, however, newcomers encounter both assistance and resistance, and this tempers their hopes and dreams.

The reasons immigrants and refugees name for coming to the United States are also diverse. To prepare for a presentation, a researcher listed the following examples of why people come to the U.S.:

- War in their home country: People from countries such as Kosovo, Bosnia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cambodia, and Vietnam come as immigrants and refugees to Western Massachusetts to escape war and its after-effects.
- Religious persecution: Refugees, particularly from former Soviet states, receive support to resettle in our area.

- Marriage to a United States citizen: Immigrants may have come to the U.S. for another reason and met partners here, or they may have met in their home country and left to build a family in this country.
- A better life: Immigrants come from around the world to pursue opportunities they do not have in their home countries.
- Family: To reunite with family members already living in the United States.

Whatever their reasons for coming, immigrants and refugees arrive with hopes and dreams and work to achieve them. As they settle into the United States, however, newcomers encounter both assistance and resistance, and this tempers their hopes and dreams. Learning English remains an incredible challenge for adult learners. Discovering U.S. culture, customs, and practices is at times interesting and other times confusing. Newcomers are incredibly grateful for support from institutions such as language schools or religious groups, and uncertain in the face of obstacles created by institutions such as the INS. In a group discussion of the meaning of the word "immigrant," researcher Janet Jimenez beautifully crystallizes the immigrant's motivations and early experiences in the United States:

> "For me, the immigrant is [one] who leaves her country, her family, her house, and goes to another country and tries to live in this country, tries to make a new life, new friends, and maybe a new family. I think for the immigrants it's hard to stay in another country [that is] very different from your native country. But sometimes [when] the people emigrate from other places, it's for the better. Like birds immigrating when the winter comes to other places more comfortable."

We hope that the five findings that follow, and the stories and quotes chosen to illuminate them, will offer a glimpse of the richness and variety of our participants' lives and experiences, their strengths as well as their struggles.

***Immigrants and refugees are confused about the immigration process and changes.***

Researchers at both sites heard stories about how newcomers are confused about immigration laws and the status of immigrants in general. During an interview at CNA, a refugee from Moldova, for example, responded to a question on changes in Immigration policy by saying, "I don't know. No, I didn't hear. What kind of changes? I didn't, I didn't hear. Actually, I don't remember any changes." (He paused to read the question again.) "Oh actually, yeah, yeah, I hear that Clinton, that President Clinton changed some immigration policy, but I don't remember what exactly he changed." Other learners may know more details about the changes made in the law, but seek support to meet the often-confusing requirements. At ILI a learner, who applied for Political Asylum because a judge in her

country threatened her, said: "Everybody came here and they feel very disoriented because they don't know what to do. They have to go to get the information. They don't know a special person, specialized in orienting them."

Newcomers need clear information in order to understand their immigration status, change their visa, apply for a Green Card, or become a U.S. citizen. Learners at both sites, however, talked about how locating this information and maneuvering through changing laws often proves challenging, particularly for those new to English. Lack of information can lead to negative impact on the status and lives of newcomers. Some immigrants who need to change their immigration status, for example, are not aware that they need to act quickly so as not to overstay their visa and become illegal. One learner married to a Legal Permanent Resident unintentionally overstayed the visa. This person could not leave her spouse and child; she remains in the country illegally, trying to resolve her immigration status.

> "When they come here, they have to fight with the language, culture, and weather. They feel terrible, but they try to get used to it."
>
> *A Research Team Member*

CNA researchers interviewed a group of immigrants seeking citizenship who also talked about some of the challenges of obtaining good information and working with the INS. These immigrants were assisted in their citizenship applications by CNA's Citizenship Assistance Program (CAP), a project instituted in response to learners' requests for information about immigration and citizenship issues. Changes Project researchers spoke with eight CAP participants during a focus group discussion to learn about their experiences during immigration reform. The eight participants were at different stages of the application process: two were sworn in as citizens and the remaining six were waiting for their INS interviews. Researchers first asked: "Is the citizenship process easy or hard for you?" People answered by saying "hard" or nodding their heads in agreement. No one said it is easy. One person said it depends on the individual situation. INS practices and requirements that made the process challenging included:

- Difficulty getting information from the INS about the status of your case. One person talked about the problems with not being able to talk to an INS staff person when contacting the INS. He said he made 15 calls in one day to the INS and was repeatedly trapped in the voice mail system. As he was unable to get the information he needed about his case from the voice mail system, his questions remained unanswered.

- Poor treatment and rude behavior from INS workers. One person talked about how rude INS workers were to an immigrant with a Green Card problem. This person was at INS with her American sponsors who also thought the INS workers were rude. The focus group participant noted that the ethnicity of INS worker

does not matter; even if workers look like they could have been immigrants themselves, they were still rude. There were exceptions to this kind of treatment, another focus group participant said that the INS worker who conducted her citizenship interview was kind.

- Needing to be very prepared. Two people who had just become citizens talked about how hard they had to study for the American history test. Two people mentioned the importance of bringing the right documents when you have an appointment with the INS. One person was questioned when she brought a copy of a document instead of the original.

- Making small mistakes can lead to big problems. One person went to his citizenship interview and was told he had started the process five months too early. He had to start the application process from the beginning and pay the fees again.

Learners at ILI reported similar problems with the INS. An ILI researcher reported that the form she received from the INS to renew her Green Card was outdated. She knew the fee had been raised, but the form she received listed the outdated, lower fee. Sending in the wrong fee can delay your application for months.

These experiences with the INS in particular and the immigration system in general result in two strands of impact on immigrant and refugee learners. The first strand represents the difficulty immigrants and refugees face in taking action to meet their goals around their legal status in the U.S. The INS as an institution is not helpful to these newcomers, as demonstrated by the difficulty newcomers have in getting information as well as the negative treatment they experience at INS offices. The second strand contains the uncertainty, fear, and confusion that are the by-products of the ever-changing immigration process. Newcomers confront a host of challenges when they leave their home countries and cultures. As one researcher said, "When they come here, they have to fight with the language, culture, and weather. They feel terrible, but they try to get used to it." The frequently changing and often confusing laws and requirements then compound this acculturation stress.

***Immigrants are confused about eligibility for public benefits and how receiving benefits could affect their immigration status.***

Many learners aren't clear about all the details of immigration reform, but a number of them talked about changes in benefits for immigrants. There was broad concern about the benefits available to immigrants, and although immigration reform touched particularly on benefits relating to the welfare system, some learners expressed concern about benefits beyond the

reach of Immigration reform. For example, some learners had misinformation about immigrant benefits: one person interviewed at CNA believed the children of immigrants could not go to public school, while in a CNA focus group discussion some learners reported hearing that children born to immigrants would no longer automatically be citizens. Following a heated discussion and some outside research, this rumor was proven untrue. At ILI many learners assumed that, because they were not citizens or were in the process of adjusting their status, they were ineligible for all public benefits. In many instances even if they were in need, newcomers would not even investigate if they were eligible, fearing to receive a "no" without explanation.

Some CNA learners and participants were especially concerned about retirement benefits. CNA tends to serve an older group of learners; some ESOL learners are in their 50s, 60s and even 70s. A CNA team member talked about how she knows many immigrants and refugees who have been in the U.S. a long time, and have recently become interested in going through the citizenship process. Based on her conversations with these newcomers, she believes they want to become citizens to ensure they receive retirement benefits such as Social Security.

During the two years of the Changes Project only a small percentage of immigrant or refugee ILI and CNA learners received welfare or food stamp benefits. Team members from both sites discussed possible explanations for this, including:

- Immigrants don't need benefits because they are earning enough to support themselves and their families. The vast majority of learners support themselves through work or is part of a family that supports them.

- Immigrants do not believe they are eligible for benefits because of their immigration status. In some cases, such as welfare benefits for those who recently entered the country, this is true under immigration reform. Other benefits, such as free medical aid for low-income people, are available to any Massachusetts resident, including immigrants.

- Immigrants are proud and have negative attitudes toward receiving welfare. Some immigrants come from countries without state supported safety net programs; the concept of welfare is new to them. Some immigrants share the negative views of welfare that native-born people have. One team member, for example, spoke eloquently of how her negative view of welfare recipients was changed through participation in the Changes Project. She wrote: "In relation with the other issues of the project, I can say that I learned a lesson, specially about welfare because this project made me change my mind about welfare recipients, I was part of the group

of people that believed that welfare recipients were just 'lazy people', and now that I know some of the problems that people have to face with the changes in welfare laws I learned to not believe in stereotypes."

- Immigrants feel they've been treated badly at the welfare office and do not want to subject themselves to negative treatment or excessive bureaucracy. One of the CNA researchers talked about a friend, a woman originally from Central America, who thought about applying for food stamps. This woman has three children, and, although she was working part-time, her husband had been laid off from his job. At the Welfare Office, they gave her so many forms to fill out that she decided not to apply.

In our work, there were not many stories about newcomers receiving welfare benefits. This is partly due to the impact of the factors listed above as well as the legislation itself. What follows are two examples of the very few stories we know of the challenges immigrants face because of their immigration status when they apply for welfare. These stories shed light on the connection between immigration and welfare reforms. The first is a story a CNA learner recounted about her adult son who is a long-time, legal resident of the United States. The son applied for welfare benefits for temporary support, but was told he was not eligible because he was not a citizen. The family consulted CNA's Citizenship Coordinator who determined that because the son had been in the U.S. for a long time and could apply for citizenship, he was eligible for Welfare benefits. She wrote a letter to the Welfare Department, and the son was granted benefits. In another case, a CNA computer student, who also is a single mother and community college student, was in the final stages of applying for citizenship when she became sick and needed assistance. She applied for Welfare, where they questioned her about being a citizen. She eventually was granted benefits after completing extra paperwork to show she had worked 10 quarters in the U.S.

A number of newcomers at both sites talked about how unfair it is that they do not have access to the same treatment and benefits as citizens even though they pay taxes, work, and contribute to the country. CNA newcomers questioned how the INS could treat tax-paying immigrants so badly. One person demanded that INS workers be told to treat people with kindness. When asked if immigrants are treated differently from citizens, an ILI learner who is an undocumented immigrant answered: "For example, the resident doesn't have the same rights as the citizen and they can't get the benefits from social security so the residents need to become citizens in order to get all the benefits." She went on to say, "I feel that is something unfair because residents in this country work and they deserve the same rights as citizens."

***Undocumented people are scared. They are afraid to access benefits and request fair treatment.***

Because they fear being caught and sent home, undocumented people are afraid to ask for information about the immigration process; how to use the health care system; how to determine if they are eligible for benefits; and how to get equal treatment in the workplace. It is not known how many of our learners are here without documents, as this information is not reported to the sites. These learners – who are negatively referred to as "illegal aliens" – are careful about when and to whom they talk about their situation. An interviewee revealed he was undocumented only when the tape recorder was turned off and the interview completed. Another learner, however, was willing to write about his situation as part of a focus group. His story follows, but with some particulars of his history edited out to protect him from identification:

> "Many years ago I wanted to come to USA. All my friends came to U.S. and their life changed for good. I tried twice to get the visa but nothing happen. So I came illegally with people who charge to bring immigrants illegally to U.S. After 13 days I got to [the United States]. I tried to apply for a job, but because I didn't speak English at that time I just worked as a dishwasher, but the life was too expensive and the money wasn't enough. Then I started moving to different states. Because I don't have social security neither a Green Card I have to work 12 to 13 hours a day during six days a week to earn just $300. I worked one year only to pay my illegal travel plus the interest. I finished to pay my debt, but I need to save money to send it to my wife and son who are in [my home country]. I would like to apply for the Green Card but I don't have any idea where I have to go for help. I'm afraid to be deported. I need help."

***Immigrants and refugees believe that a good education is key to a better future for themselves, their families, and their work. The immigrants and newcomers we spoke with had a broad definition of education. For them, it included further study of English, computer training, getting a Bachelor's degree and seeking advanced degrees and training.***

When they arrive in the U.S the primary goal of most immigrants is to learn English. Over and over again at both sites, learners talked about the importance of learning English. They see the English language as essential to a better life. Most learners find that their immediate need is to learn survival skills. They need to learn how to go to the bank, to the doctor's office, and to the supermarket, for example. Parents want to be able to communicate with their children's teachers and school. Many learners at both ILI and CNA mentioned that what they learn in class helps them to meet these basic communication needs. Speaking the

language at a basic level is also an important step for immigrants to get their needs and rights respected. A Brazilian learner from CNA said, "If you don't speak English you can't defend yourself."

Once learners advance with their English, many of them want to continue learning new skills or study at area colleges. Learners' motivation to learn led to CNA developing a computer lab program and ILI opening a computer self-access program. Both sites also assist learners who want to study at higher levels or enter a college or training program.

In response to interview questions, two CNA learners had the following to say about the importance of education:

"If you don't speak English you can't defend yourself."

"That's a good future [to study English and computer]! If you learn, that's a good future. For your future, for long one. If every[one] has a chance to learn, that's the best for your future, for your job."

"I'll be able to finish liberal arts in the [community college], then I may be able to find a better job... I'm hoping to find a better job with better earning wage. So I don't have to struggle every day to get somewhere."

An ILI learner going through a long process of becoming a Legal Permanent Resident talked about her plans after finishing at ILI: "I want to go to the university to do a Masters degree, but even when I finish the classes in ILI, I have to wait for the immigration status because without it I can't do anything."

This last comment speaks to the barriers learners face as they purse their educational goals. For some, as above, finding the funds to attend school is difficult or impossible depending on economic issues and immigration status. Others are unable to find the time to continue studying, most often because they must work. Although newcomers almost universally recognize education as a tool for a better future in the long term, they must meet the immediate needs of supporting themselves and their families. (See both Understanding the Context of Learners' Lives and the Impact of the Changing Workplace sections for further information.)

***Immigrants and refugees have both positive and negative experiences as they settle into the United States. Some newcomers experience discrimination or different treatment. Some newcomers experience Americans as friendly and helpful.***

Newcomers experience a variety of emotions when they come to the United States. In a focus group with an advanced CNA class, learners described emotions that range from excited to

nervous. A woman from Mexico said: "At the beginning it is very exciting. You go to America, the land of McDonalds and money growing on trees. Then you start to get homesick, missing your country, your culture."

As they get to know people in their new communities, newcomers experience a variety of reactions from native-born U.S people. A Korean learner said, "Many Americans are very kind to foreigners, but some people are not kind." In further interviews with learners at both sites, people explored the issue more deeply. A CNA computer student talked about how people gave her "the cold shoulder" when she arrived from Japan in the 1950s. Another CNA learner from Brazil spoke of more recent experiences:

> "Oh, yeah, in general, I think there are so many discrimination... yeah, about the language some people don't like it when they speak to you and notice you are not American... I had neighbors, just one neighbor I had, they never, never say for me 'good morning' or 'how are you?' they just passed by my way."

> "At the beginning it is very exciting. You go to America, the land of McDonalds and money growing on trees. Then you start to get homesick, missing your country, your culture."
>
> *A newcomer from Mexico*

During a discussion of why immigration reform was enacted an Asian learner ventured, "Maybe they are not as sympathetic to immigrants now."

An ILI learner who arrived from Colombia two years ago spoke eloquently of experiences of being treated differently and how the treatment made her feel:

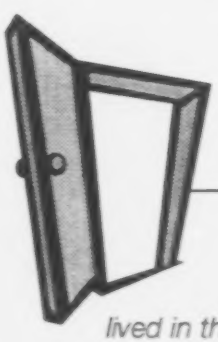
> "... I remember my first year here because I didn't speak English very well (and even now I can't do that), at the point was very difficult for me to try to communicate something in the street, in the cafe, in the store or wherever, I felt bad with myself and also because of the people's attitude toward me and many people don't have patience to listen or to try to understand people who don't speak English. Another example, I was in a group of Latin American people, my husband wasn't around, when he is around people look at me different because he looks like American even though he is from South America but his parents are from the U.S., so he's looking is pretty much American. When I am with him everything is okay, but when I am with Latin American people I have seen people who look at us differently. This situation happened on the Mass Pike, in the toll plaza."

Most learners also had positive things to say about their experience in the United States. When researchers analyzed data from interviews at CNA, they saw that most people liked living in the United States. A number of learners, most notably from the former Soviet Union

and China talked about the United States as a "freedom country." Learners at CNA and ILI recognized the kindness of many native-born U.S. people. One ILI learner from Poland said, "I got help from the people I work with because they talked to me slowly and patiently, they understand me and I understand them"

Learners were incredibly grateful for the free schooling they receive at ILI and CNA. They appreciated the skills learned as well as the supportive atmosphere. In looking at the first round of data, CNA researchers observed a pattern in learners' comments: "CNA helps people to see more possibilities for reaching their goals for the future." A CNA researcher who is both an English student and a teacher in the computer lab program said, "Yes and I think that the Center for New Americans help me in my situation... Because now I am a teacher; I teach WordPerfect 5.1 and I studied, too. Now I can talk a little bit more and write, listening and understanding more than two years ago." In a similar vein, an ILI researcher wrote about the powerful impact of the Changes Project on her life:

> "To be part of the project helped me a lot because it made me feel good, as an immigrant it gave hope and a lot of tools and information, and I would like to find a good way to help other people, specially immigrants. I can say that 'the Changes Project' made a big impact in my life, I feel lucky and thankful because I found very good friends that always supported me when I needed, I'm glad that the project was my first work experience in this country because I could improve my language skills, I was able to do things that I considered a 'big challenge' (like doing presentations in English) and it make me feel proud of myself, it helped me because I could share my problems and experiences as an immigrant and now I feel stronger and happier."



## MEET A RESEARCHER

***Yoon Joo Lee**, a researcher on the ILI team, is from Korea. Yoon Joo has lived in the U.S. for nearly three years and has a two-year old son. She has a Master's in Chemistry from Korea and is interested in becoming an English teacher for children when she returns to Korea. In addition to courses at UM/Amherst, she has taken Teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages courses. Her husband is Korean and is in the US as a post-doctoral student at UM/Amherst. They plan to return to Korea. Yoon Joo was able to be involved in the Changes Project at two different times.*

## *The Impact of the Changing Workplace*

### The Context

**Current Trends in the Workplace**

A generation ago jobs were linked to local economies and national businesses. Today, jobs are affected by the globalization of markets, products, currencies, and economies. Current trends in the workplace show a decline in manufacturing jobs, and an increase in service work, automation, and new technology. This is true for most sectors in international to local economies. The demographics of the U.S. workforce are also changing. In 1995, 63% of married women with children under the age of six were working, compared to 18% in 1960. The number of African American and Hispanic workers accounted for more than a quarter of the U.S. workforce in 1995 and are expected to grow to a third of the workforce by 2005 (Department of Labor, 1999).

In our rapidly changing world the technical tools, communication skills and knowledge needed to do our jobs seem to change before we can master them. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1950 60% of all jobs were available to unskilled workers. By 1996, only 30% of jobs were open to unskilled workers, and by 2000, just 15% of all jobs will be classified as unskilled (Department of Labor, 1999).

In 1991 and 1992, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identified a set of skills and competencies necessary for working and living in a changing work world. In addition to basic reading, writing, mathematics, and communication skills, SCANS included the ability to learn, reason, think creatively, solve problems, and make decisions. Personal qualities like individual responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, sociability, and integrity were also identified by SCANS. A set of workplace competencies suggested by SCANS included interpersonal skills, information skills, systems skills, and technology skills. Employers and labor unions in Franklin and Hampshire counties in a 1992 survey recognized several of these same skills. The survey identified effective problem solving, communication, and teamwork skills as some of the new basic skills needed in the workplace, according to a University of Massachusetts Labor/Management Workplace Education Program study.

Nationally and locally, workers with a variety of skills and competencies are in demand. The ability to diversify tasks, good communication skills, and a broad range of computer knowledge and expertise are required for jobs from health care to business administration. Adaptability to change, the ability to learn new procedures and programs, and flexibility are all valued by employers.

**The Changing Nature of Work in Massachusetts**

In Massachusetts, computer software and home health care top the list of the fastest-growing industries for 1996 to 2006, with a projected job growth rate of 89% and 68%, respectively according to the state's Division of Employment and Training. Other growth industries include: residential care facilities (57%); water and sanitation services (47%); management and public relations (46%); job training and related services (44%); security and commodity brokers (43%); research and testing services (42%); personnel supply services (39%); child day care (38%); health practitioners' offices (33%); and other social services (30%).

According to a December 1998 report by the National Priorities Project, however, 42% of the fastest growing occupations in Massachusetts pay less than half of a livable wage (calculated at $38,490 a year for a family of four). These include jobs such as home health aides, retail sales clerks, waiters and waitresses, cashiers, nursing aides and orderlies, pre-school teachers, and janitors. According to the report "Careers '99," appearing in the October 17, 1999 *Boston Globe*, the trend toward "flexible staffing options" is also on the rise. The use of independent contractors, outsourced jobs, and temporary workers who have no benefits or job security has become widespread in both public and private sectors.

In Massachusetts nearly half of the new jobs created through the year 2006 will require at least a college education, (Careers '99, Boston Globe, October 17, 1999). Ten percent of these new jobs will require a high school degree plus training, and an additional 13% will require moderate to long-term apprenticeships or training. Less than a third of the state's new jobs will require one month or less of training, and those jobs will be at low-paying, entry-level positions.

For adult job-seekers and workers this shift will have an enormous impact. In 1997, the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training estimated that over 877,000 adults (out of a total population of 4.6 million) are functionally illiterate: they can't read or write beyond a fifth grade level (Careers '99, Boston Globe, October 17, 1999). According to MassINC (1997), an organization that studies state public policy and economic trends in Massachusetts, this skills deficit makes them totally unprepared for any but a rapidly shrinking number of the lowest paying jobs in the new economy. A report by the Nellie Mae Fund for Education, "Beyond 2000: Demographic Change, Education, and the Workforce," projects that New England states face the prospect of a workforce that will not be sufficiently educated to meet the needs of the region's businesses by the year 2012 (Coelen, 1993).

In response to this projected dearth of trained, skilled workers employers in Massachusetts, particularly start-up companies, have begun to hire immigrant workers. Contrary to popular perception, immigrants are not "taking" jobs from U.S. citizens; rather they fill a need for

employees in a state with a shrinking labor force. Between 1990 and 1997, 220,000 more U.S. citizens left Massachusetts than moved there. Without the influx of over 100,000 immigrants in the 1990s, Massachusetts would have experienced a net loss of workers (MassINC, 1997).

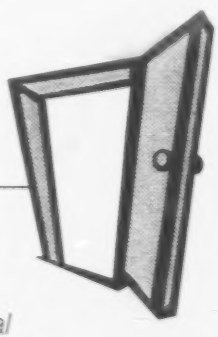
**A Different Perspective**

Some researchers and educators in the adult education field question whether the nature of work is really changing. Their research offers a critique of the popular perspective on the changing workplace outlined above. In this critique they examine several of the assumptions that form the basis of the popular perspective. Four of these assumptions are particularly relevant for our research. (For a complete discussion of the following, see Hull, 1997):

1. The popular perspective suggests that workers lack literacy and this lack impedes economic growth. Yet, recently there has been a re-evaluation of literacy as the primary vehicle for social and economic growth.
2. In the popular perspective literacy is defined as basic skills plus additional skills (including working well as a member of a team, technology, etc). This definition means that those with different skills are often seen as deficient and the skills they do have are ignored or unseen.
3. The popular perspective believes that illiteracy costs businesses. Recently, however, manufacturing and production jobs have been moving to other countries where English literacy is irrelevant.
4. The popular perspective argues that workers need to be trained in specific skills in order to succeed. Yet there is often a mismatch between the skills workers are trained to do and the skills actually required to do the job.

While our research looked at the changing workplace primarily through the lens of the popular perspective, when you reach the Findings section you will see that our research pushed us to examine the implications of the critical perspective on the changing workplace.

The Changes Project interviewed workers from three sites in order to look at changing workplace issues. The nationality, work experience, and training of these workers are enormously diverse, and their experiences in the workplace vary greatly. What follows is a description of the sites and workers that looked at changing workplace issues.



## MEET A RESEARCHER

***Jenny Genge-Perez***, *a researcher for the ILI team, is in her late-twenties and from Colombia. Jenny is working on a Master's in International Education at UM/Amherst. She was involved in the Changes Project for over a year.*

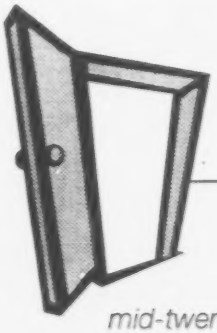
**The Changing Workplace Context for Newcomers**

Learners at the International Language Institute (ILI) and the Center for New Americans (CNA) come from many different cultures and diverse educational and professional backgrounds. At one of the end of the spectrum are 20 year-olds who were learners in their home countries; at the other are 70 year-olds retired from professions such as chemistry. Some learners who in their countries had been professionals arrive in this country not knowing how to apply their skills. The average or representative learner is in their 30s or 40s. He or she is enrolled in a beginning to intermediate level English or basic computer skills training program. He or she is more than likely to be working.

In a survey of 56 CNA learners in the spring of 1999, 26 (46%) said they are employed in jobs such as cook, wait person, floor washer, and bus person. One person identified as a manager. Twelve (80%) of the fifteen learners interviewed by CNA researchers are employed in jobs such as cook, baker, or office assistant. The majority of learners are not using the work skills developed in their home country. Teachers worked as bus girls or floor washers, for example, and engineers as cleaners.

Twenty-seven learners (48%) completing the spring 1999 survey said they did not have a job. Seventeen of these respondents were women living with their husbands. Other respondents lived with family or friends. Sixteen learners (59%) said they were studying English because they needed it for a job.

At ILI, of the 32 people who answered the workplace section of the 1998 survey, 16 (50%) are employed. Of the 16 employed, 10 work full-time, four work part-time, one is a work-study student, and one is doing the welfare work requirement. Out of the 32 respondents, 22 were women. All of the learners at ILI are studying English at the intermediate and advanced levels. At ILI's two morning classes, each with 11 learners, most are restaurant workers: cooks, dishwashers, waiters, etc. In the two evening classes at ILI, again each with 11 learners, jobs tend to vary: nurse's assistant, office assistant, machine operator, housekeeper, receptionist. There are also a small percentage of spouses of UM/Amherst students who cannot work, another small number of mothers who stay home to raise their children, and a few learners who are retired.



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

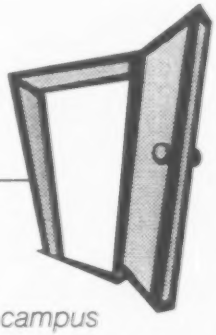
***Ileana Pino**, a researcher for the ILI team, is from Puerto Rico. In her mid-twenties, Ileana has a degree in Human Resources and was working on her Master's in Labor at UMass. Recently she took a semester of from school to reconsider what she really wants to major in. She is a full-time teller at a local bank. She was involved in the Changes Project from the beginning.*

Overwhelmingly, ILI and CNA learners identified improving their English as the most important tool for getting into or advancing in the workplace. Even after having gained some English skills, that is not enough. They also need to be certified in their field to be able to work at the same kind of job they held in their home countries. This certification process can take years. Even if they were certified in their own country they need to be re-certified here. As a result, many learners end up taking any job they can until they are able to fulfill the requirements to go back to their area of expertise. In addition, learners often find they need to be computer literate, problem-solvers. Thus, the road to getting the ideal job for immigrants and refugees is a long and frustrating one. A few people the ILI researchers talked to have, in fact, changed their goal of attaining the job that they initially wanted.

**The Changing Workplace Context at UM/Amherst**

The Labor/Management Workplace Education Program (LMWEP) at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst is an employer/union partnership program between the Association of Federal, State, and Municipal Employees Local 1776 (AFSCME), the University Staff Association/Massachusetts Teachers Association (USA), and the University of Massachusetts. The population of workers at the university targeted for this study include over 100 front line workers who are members either of AFSCME, a bargaining unit with over 1000 members, as well as members of USA, a bargaining unit with over 1100 members. AFSCME members represent most of the service sector at the university: dining hall and food service workers, housing staff, custodians, trades workers, physical plant employees. USA members represent most of the office workers at the university: secretaries, administrative assistants, bookkeepers, library workers, clerks, information assistants. In AFSCME, the ratio of male to female workers is 2 to 1, while more female workers are represented among USA members.

At UM/Amherst the most striking characteristics of the changing workplace include new job growth, privatization, the growth of new technologies, diversification of work duties, and an increasing need for basic computer and communication skills. Job growth is mainly in the area of part-time, sub-contracted, un-benefited, and non-bargaining unit workers. The number of these jobs has grown in the two-year time frame of this study.



---

## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Ramona M. Balicki**, a researcher on the UM/LMWEP team.*

*A native of Northampton, now living in Hadley, Mona has been on the Amherst campus for almost four years, working originally in Residence Life Housing Services, transferring to Athletics for just under a year, and returning to the Finance Department of Housing Services in the fall of 1997. Married to UM/Amherst employee, David P. Dec, she is the mother of a 25 year-old daughter who attended UM/Amherst. Along with working in the Changes Program, Mona is a member of UWN and the USA/MTA Judiciary Committee.*

The trend toward privatization has been a major focus for UM/Amherst workers. Massachusetts government has pursued a policy of privatization throughout most of the 1990s, turning many state jobs and workplaces over to the private sector in areas such as health care, mental health, social services, and education. Because most of the UM/Amherst workforce is unionized, the rate of privatization has been slower than it most likely would have been without labor representation. Since 1998, however, the trustees have been considering privatization of some campus activities such as Campus Center services, food services, and textbook services – jobs that are represented by the AFSCME, USA/MTA, and SEIU labor unions. Since 1994, the number of AFSCME workers has dropped seven percent.

## Workplace Findings

Participants from the three sites in the changing workplace study reflect a range of experiences along the work continuum. Respondents from ILI and CNA are immigrants or visitors to this country who are still learning English and working or seeking work in many different fields. Most of the respondents from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst are members of a unionized workforce working for a single employer and have a wide array of jobs, education, and experience in the workplace. These participants are also all adult learners.

The findings listed below reflect themes found in the data. They represent responses we heard in the interview and focus group transcripts and survey results. We include representative quotes from the data in order to illuminate each finding, and to highlight the stories that form the heart of this work. The adult learners we talked to about the changing nature of the workplace proved to be very different at the sites investigating this issue. Trying to combine findings from the three sites presented challenges; there were similarities between the learners from CNA and ILI, but many differences between them and UM/Amherst learners. We decided to address this by organizing the findings into three sections. Within each of these sections, newcomer findings and findings from the research done at the University of Massachusetts are delineated. The sections are:

- The Relationship Between the Workplace, Education and Training
- The Impact of Technology
- Experiences and Treatment in the Workplace

The focus of this aspect of our research was trying to understand the impact of the changing workplace on adult learners' achievement of their education goals. This proved to be a complex phenomenon that was often difficult to ask about or understand in isolation from the total experience of being a worker or a job seeker. As a result the findings that follow are not all directly related to how the workplace is changing. Instead, they reflect the range of responses

and experiences of those we talked with. The findings describe the tensions between jobs and education and the impact of technology. They present a picture of how workers view their treatment in the workplace as well as the desire for change engendered by these experiences. They also detail personal and institutional barriers that workers face both as they enter the workplace and as they seek to advance in the workplace.

Some respondents talked about the ways that jobs, employers, work duties, or management styles have remained the same. Many of the stories told in this section come from workers in fields where technology has not yet changed greatly, such as, restaurants, laundries, and janitorial services. Many of the newcomers had no other U.S. jobs with which to compare their workplace experiences and some newcomers compared their U.S. experiences to jobs held in other countries. What was evident across both newcomers and UM workers is the desire of workers and job seekers to improve their working lives, to move from these jobs into jobs that offer more respect, pay, or a different kind of challenge. Many workers believe that they will need to improve their skills in order to make this move.

We hope that the nineteen findings that follow, and the stories and quotes chosen to illuminate them, will offer a glimpse of the richness and variety of our participants' lives and experiences, their strengths as well as their struggles.

## • The Relationship Between the Workplace, Education and Training

The findings in this section speak to the relationship between the workplace, education, and training. For many workers, but particularly for newcomers, the necessity of having a job takes precedence over education. Many workers voice uncertainty about how work will change in the future and what that will mean for them. Workers' experiences seeking education, training and advancement are often connected to the multiple roles they perform as workers, learners, parents, and community members.

### Newcomer Findings

***Newcomer workers and job seekers view their lack of English skills in particular and education in general as their greatest barrier.***

Some newcomers come to the United States to improve their economic opportunities. Others arrive in this country with work experience and hope to secure a job similar to one they held in their home country. As described in the Immigration Reform Findings section, learners at both the ILI and CNA sites have a strong belief in education as a vital support for

newcomers making the transition to living and finding employment in the United States. English and other skills gained in a classroom are viewed as particularly important for workplace success. Although a few learners talked about how they did not need English for their current jobs in bakeries or laundries, for example, even these learners believe that they will need to improve their English if they want to advance in the workplace.

Most learners arrive with high expectations about what they will be able to achieve in the United States. Even with advanced skills and professional experience, however, many newcomers find their lack of English proficiency is a daunting hurdle to succeeding in the workplace. After a few months or years in this country, many become pessimistic about securing their chosen work. A learner interviewed at ILI described his frustrations:

> "Actually, I had a problem with my 'seek of job' [job hunting]. You know I have papers prepared very carefully, letters of recommendations from here not from Russia, but when I send them I hoped that most of the companies would accept me and then, they not agree to hire me, it's usual. They will answer my letters, because my letters, resume, and letter of recommendation are worth. But when they asked me for an interview they will find I am a person from a different country with low skills of English, so they won't hire me..."

The ramifications of not getting a good education, particularly in light of the changes in the nature of work and the job market in Massachusetts over the past 20 years, are clear from an interview with a Thai immigrant who had not been able to attend school. She has lived in the U.S. since 1973 and has seen the area and workplace needs change. It is much harder now to get a job with a living wage without adequate English skills and strong reading and writing skills. She talked about one of her early jobs in the U.S., "I have to work, my ex no support me. I have to work factory, sweatshop. Really sweat shop. I have to work hard. I work with chemical. I work with epoxy. I used to work in Worcester. I come home I feel so bad, because I work Thailand, I no work hard like that. I still work hard. I really do right now." Right now this woman works as a housekeeper, and noted that it is harder to find a job today, with her level of education than it was when she first arrived. "Every factory, every place, you have a hard time to find a job. If, like me, I don't have education. I no have chance at all to find a good job. You have to work really hard, at bad job, that's all, you know."

"If I learn first is more easy to find a job."

*A learner from the Dominican Republic*

***Newcomer workers often are forced to choose between their roles as learners, workers, and family members.***

Although ILI and CNA learners are enthusiastic about and committed to studying as a way to reach their goal of a better future, they face obstacles to coming to classes. As adults, they must juggle multiple responsibilities as learners, parents, and workers. The demands and schedules of the workplace is a particular obstacle to attending class and staying enrolled in programs. In a spring 1999 survey, 63% of learners who are employed said that they sometimes missed class because of work. In a 1998 survey completed by CNA learners, 13 of 18 respondents said that they knew other learners who had to leave school because of a job.

At CNA, researchers talked with learners about this work-school conflict. One of the team's interview questions was: "If you could choose between more studying and more work which would you choose?" There were a variety of responses to this question. Some people said they did not want to choose because they wanted to do both. Others said that they would need to choose work to support their families. A few people talked about how they would choose studying because it would allow them to improve English and job skills.

The difficulties of choosing between work and school are evident in the comments of a Dominican woman interviewed at CNA. Early in the interview, she said, "If I learn first is more easy to find a job." Like others, she sees study as a critical part of the process of securing a good job. Later in the interview when she was asked what her choice would be if she had to choose between work and school, she said, "Maybe three months ago I said studying, but now my mind change, because I have to work because my husband can't work now. Only I am working." Meeting immediate family needs often must take precedence over longer-term goals.

Newcomer workers experience a tremendous conflict between their roles as learners, workers, and family members. They feel forced to choose between work and school, and when this kind of choice must be made, they choose work first in order to support their families.

***Newcomers are frustrated by the fact that they need to take an exam, get certified, or go back to school to validate their degrees, professional experience, and training from their home countries.***

Unlike their native-born peers, newcomers face a different reality when they seek employment. Many newcomers arrive in this country with particular job skills developed in their home countries, but they are unable to work at or secure jobs that allow them to use these skills. Many people we talked to at ILI expressed some frustration when applying for jobs they

used to have in their own countries. They talked about the requirements being different. Some mentioned the fact that they need a Master's degree. Others talked about needing to learn more English before they could seek additional certification.

A woman from Puerto Rico, when asked what her ideal job is at a focus group, said:

> "My ideal job is to be a nurse, the same job I was doing in my country. The skills I need are the same [and yet here] the requirements are I have to take a Mass. Board exam and get my license as an RN [to do that]. I have to improve my English, I have to study with books."

Other learners at ILI also spoke about this dilemma:

> "I would like to be a tax advisor, or counselor. I got the knowledge of the tax code in my country, which is based on the U.S. tax code. I know the business rules, I know computers, software for bookkeeping. I have to get certification. I need the evaluation of my diploma, and perfect English."

> "I would like to have here the same job I had in my country. To work as a vet assistant. I don't think I need any skill or training. I will learn my job during the job."

At CNA, a team member talked about an immigrant she knows from Eastern Europe who was a dentist. He can not work as a dentist in the United States and is now employed in a factory. He is thinking of returning to his home country because he can not work as a dentist here.

In an interesting contrast to the experience of most learners, one CNA learner who is a refugee from Moldova found work similar to the job he held in his home country. "I'm right now machine tech, machine technician, actually equipment performance technician, it's a new name. So I like the job. It's pretty close to the job that I did in my country, so I'm very glad." After listening to the whole tape of this man's interview, CNA researchers remarked how happy and confident the young man seemed about all aspects of his new life in the United States.

## UM/Amherst Worker Findings

***Many workers seek opportunities for career growth, advancement, training and support for employees getting onto a career track.***

The university offers more educational opportunities for employees than most other employers in the region. Tuition waivers, tuition remission, partial tuition payment for continuing education, training and education offerings through LMWEP and the Training and Development Unit (at th niversity), and a small number of apprenticeships are offered to benefited employees. Man orkers stated that these education and training benefits and the possibilities for advancement at a large institution were the reasons that they came to work at UM/Amherst. (Eighty-three percent of respondents to the UM/Amherst workplace survey indicated that they strongly agree or agree it is important to keep continuing their education as a lifelong learner.)

At several focus groups, workers talked about their desires for additional apprentice programs, support and information regarding training and education options, and career ladders for attaining other jobs. For example, some dining commons workers would like to be able to take a culinary arts training program, such as the program offered at a local community college, to become trained chefs and cooks. Some maintenance workers would like access to skilled trades apprenticeships. Other workers would like a better bridge to continuing education degree programs as part of their benefits, without having to pay tuition. (Thirty-seven-and-a-half percent of respondents to the UM/Amherst workplace survey strongly agree or agree with the statement "My supervisor is encouraging of my educational efforts." Thirty-three-and-a-half percent of respondents disagree or disagree strongly with that statement. In response to the statement "My co-workers are more reluctant to cover for me while I'm taking a class", 26.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 26.7% disagreed or disagreed strongly. Thirty-four-and-a-half percent indicated that the statement did not apply.) Some workers said that they would like support to acquire college credits so they could apply to the universityís undergraduate degree program for nontraditional working adults.

While release time for job-related education and training is an official benefit for UM/Amherst workers, in practice it's difficult for many workers to take advantage of this option. Many workers told stories about difficulties in obtaining release time from their supervisors to attend classes and some of the friction that leaving for class caused with their co-workers. Some departments, especially those that have been downsized, feel that they can't offer release time for classes. One worker said,

> "I wanted to take a class, but it was a problem. I leave for two hours, and there has to be somebody in my place, because there are still things that need to be done.

> Of course, other workers don't like that, because they have to do it. I asked my manager, and she says, 'That's fine, I'm gonna manage it.' But every morning when I come, and the supervisor has to do the job for each person, she's kind of not happy. Because all the time I have to work hard, and nothing has been done by management. They say, 'we can manage it,' but we see what happens."

In focus groups, workers talked about different strategies for obtaining release time to attend classes. Workers often complained about the inconsistent application of release time policy. One worker said,

> "Some departments will let you use release time if a class isn't offered during your regular work time, and you can still get those two hours off, and some departments don't. So it's a policy that's not the same for all of the campus."

Many of the issues raised by workers seeking support for training and a career track reflect the need to rethink workers' potential. Some workers feel devalued because of their need or desire for education and training. This attitude was noted by several workers, particularly the USA stewards who participated in a focus group, who said that professional workers are rewarded, promoted, and receive pay increases and release time for their pursuit of education and training, while classified staff are thwarted and unsupported in their training and education endeavors. In the workplace survey, two-thirds of the 206 respondents disagreed with the statement, "I have more opportunities for career and job advancement," indicating a strong need for career growth and development opportunities for classified workers.

Clerical workers, in particular, noted that the new skills and ongoing training needed for their jobs had not panned out as they had hoped: new skills, training, and experience had not led to better pay or higher grade jobs for most respondents.

***Many workers are very uncertain about the kinds of skills and education they will need in the future.***

Office and information-based workers discussed a need for continual training so they could be prepared for future changes to their jobs. They also expressed uncertainty about what those changes might be. Among food service and custodial workers, there was less concern about specific changes in their jobs, but concern that those jobs would be eliminated.

Workers in both focus groups and interviews voiced uncertainty about what jobs they would have several years from now. In focus groups, workers made comments such as:

> "Well, in my imagination, I imagine myself learning how to use a computer and having a different job."

"Well, something more than I'm doing now – higher grades. I don't really know what that's going to be."

The uncertainty surrounding what jobs UMass/Amherst workers will have in the future and the skills and education needed were voiced differently in the workplace survey. Of the 206 respondents, 66% said that they agreed with the statement, "I have a better sense of how my job skills may have to change for work in the future." Since more than 69% of the survey respondents were clerical workers, that answer may reflect their awareness of future skill and education trends based on recent information technology changes in their work. Since almost two-thirds of those heard from in interviews and focus groups were service and trades workers whose jobs have not changed as dramatically, the uncertainties that they voice are also more reflective of trends in their jobs. While work practices have changed less dramatically, many of their jobs are perceived to be threatened or dead-end. Those workers may be looking at the prospects of retooling for new or different jobs, and they voice an uncertainty about what skills and education they will need.

Most workers tied their expectations about training needed for jobs in the future to hopes for better-paying jobs. Clerical workers, in particular, noted that the new skills and ongoing training needed for their jobs had not panned out as they had hoped: new skills, training, and experience had not led to better pay or higher grade jobs for most respondents.

***Language and writing barriers affect workers' understanding of workplace changes.***

During focus groups with the LMWEP ESOL class and LMWEP reading, writing, spelling, math, and computer basics class, learners talked about their experience of language and writing barriers. In the Changes research project team, a team member who is a union steward talked about some workers not being able to spell or write very well, which made it difficult for them to communicate in writing to supervisors or co-workers. Another research team member said, "My area has a problem with the language barrier as well as with reading. I've asked three people if I could interview them and they agreed to interview gladly. But it came directly from them that these issues kept them from participating."

Speaking about how difficult it is to get his co-workers to fill out surveys about the effects of the changing workplace, he said, "The barrier is the questionnaires themselves. They automatically recycle them because they can't read them and the English language is new to them. They can get by at work but they can't read and comprehend most of the questionnaire."

Some workers, in describing their struggles with reading and writing, however, talked about the ways in which their workplace was a source of support as they were improving their skills.

An Asian worker who has lived in this country for three years cited the ways in which her supervisor and the ESOL class helped her with the frustration she experiences in not being understood.

> "After I work here one year and then I know something, some labels and some words more, and then I could come here and my supervisor drill me and she ask me something in English... and sometimes my supervisor say, 'never mind,' and she say to speak more slowly and she ask me, 'oh, you know, you can ask me something,' or 'you know you can go on the third floor right here, you know that right here?' And I say, 'okay, I know that."

These language and writing barriers impact their ability to understand new procedures and new products, (such as the use of cleaning chemicals) and affect their ability to be understood by supervisors and co-workers.

Both newcomer and UM/Amherst respondents explore the tension between holding jobs and bettering their education. Confusion and uncertainty about how work might continue to change was also a concern shared by respondents. They cite the need for workplace skills and education. They see those needs, however from the perspective of the worker as whole person who must balance education, work, family, finances, community, and personal life.

### • The Impact of Technology

Workers report high hopes for jobs and training in emerging technologies, particularly newcomers who have heard so much from the media, government, and community training agencies about the potential for high-tech employment. Newcomers and UM/Amherst workers both voiced the belief that computer skills are necessary for obtaining new jobs. Basic computer literacy was seen as needed for most entry-level and skilled positions. Both newcomers and UM/Amherst workers also talked about the need for basic computer training that is geared for their particular needs and backgrounds: those who are new to technology and the English language. Finally, many participants also pointed out some of the impact that computers could have on work life: creation of jobs; increased mechanization and technology of existing jobs; and changes in workers' relationships with colleagues.

**Newcomer Findings**

***Newcomers are very interested in learning about computers. They view computer skills as a tool for improving communication and seeking information as well as entering into and advancing in the workplace.***

Newcomers are aware that computers are changing U.S. and global society. During a CNA focus group discussion with six past and current learners in the Computer Lab program, a Dominican man who has studied computers at CNA said, "Some people say that computer will be in this country and in the world like the telephone is now... This will be a necessary instrument for the new century, even now."

Believing in the growing influence of computers, newcomers are eager to learn more about this new tool; many study computers formally and informally at CNA and ILI as well as other locations. Important reasons given for gaining computer skills include:

- to get a job or a better job;
- to help a child or grandchild with school work;
- to access information, particularly from the Internet;
- to practice English and learn English computer terms.

Learners at both sites mentioned the importance of computer skills for obtaining a job most frequently. An ILI learner said, "...actually, I use ILI possibilities here not only for studying language, but also for improving American computer skills." A CNA computer student commented, "And this is an opportunity for me to learn and get a better job... Because I notice when you apply for a job or when you look in the newspaper, the first thing they ask is if you know computers. If we don't have that somebody else will get the job. Somebody more qualified will get the job."

This last quote opens the door for exploring some of the more difficult aspects of the influence of computers. This woman's words imply that there is a scarcity of good jobs. During further discussion of this problem in the focus group, one woman, who was otherwise very enthusiastic about computers, said, "In some ways they are taking over." She talked about how in the past five or ten people would have worked in a business, but now they need just one person and the computer. The group wondered what would happen to those nine people who had lost their jobs.

The participant who expressed the idea that the computer would become as prevalent as the telephone also noted how computers could break the human connection. He said:

> "If you think about the machine, like a computer. Sometimes I think it's very sad because it doesn't connect the people, the humans... If you go to the doctor now, the doctor no have communication with the patient because they only look at the computer and ask you some questions. The computer answers the questions. When you go out from the office you go empty. You need sometimes the communication. You know. In the beginning it's very frustrating. Lots of frustration."

The range of beliefs expressed about computers make for a complex and insightful analysis of how technology affects our society in both positive and negative ways. In the closing minutes of the CNA focus group, participants commented on how to work with positive and negative impact. A Costa Rican woman reminded the group that computers can't do everything: "We still have to use our hands. We still need people."

***Newcomers do not have adequate access to appropriate computer training.***

Access has multiple meanings for newcomers who are second language learners: availability, appropriateness, and affordability. First: are places in a computer training programs available to newcomers? Second: will the language learner be able to understand the teacher or the comments of fellow learners? Will the learner enter into a comfortable atmosphere that supports learning? Third: will the newcomer have the money to pay for a class or a computer for home practice? Newcomers face obstacles to computer learning on all of these points.

Newcomers often face waiting lists when they try to enroll in a computer-training program. The Center for New Americans' Community Computer Lab Program, for example, has had a waiting list during most of its four-year existence. During 1999, the waiting list for the Northampton lab reached 15 people while the newly opened Amherst lab's list exceeded 20. One of the reasons for the lab's popularity is its instructional model. Learners work on a self-paced course of study under the guidance of a Computer Lab Instructor, four out of five of whom are non-native speakers of English and graduates of the program. Computer Lab learners talk about how this creates a comfortable and encouraging atmosphere for learning. A member of the Computer Lab focus group said:

> "One of the things that I believe is when you start here, you get ready when you finish. Like I know that [my computer teacher] study English here... I don't feel like I'm ready to go to the community college as an example. When I finish here I might be ready for community college, but I have to finish the level, the second level, whatever I have to finish to keep up with them. If I don't know anything I can't jump in places like that."

In contrast to the positive comments about the CNA model, two focus group participants who also had studied at the community college offered criticism of those programs. A young man from India with advanced English skills said:

> "Yeah, I finished up my basic computer here so I went to the college and deposit some money and start the classes, but the problem is the course is only for four weeks, five weeks... The lecturing and the professor comes out to show some things. And I don't have a computer at home so I don't have the practice. This is the problem too, but if you come here [CNA] and say you learned slowly and ask the teacher this is good... This is really better than the community college... They [the professors] go too fast. Sometimes the professor is coming 10, 15 minutes late. This is the main problem, too, and lots of students in the one class so they talk to each other."

These comments also point to the final barrier to access: lack of money to pay for computer courses or computers for the home. Although this young man was able to pay for the class, another woman in the focus group reminded the group that not every one has money to pay for these courses. Five of the six focus group participants did not have a computer at home.

Newcomers are very interested in learning about computers and new technology, but they lack access to appropriate training and equipment. Although training is available, often there are not enough slots in a class or an appropriate teaching model. These factors limit newcomers' access to a tool identified as pivotal for success in the changing workplace.

### UM/Amherst Worker Findings

***Many workers are affected by new technologies, and whether those changes affect them positively or negatively is usually tied to how much control they have over their work.***

UM/Amherst workers talked about how technologies affect their own work and work in their departments. For some workers, computers, new technology, and new equipment offered them new skills, more interesting work, and sometimes led to higher pay or higher grade positions. For some workers, computers gave them less control over their work, fewer interactions with co-workers and the campus community, or more responsibility without an increase in pay or job grade. Workers noted that learning new technology and new computer programs can be interesting and challenging at first, but if it takes over aspects of a job that are interesting and relate to people, or make it less creative, they tend to dislike the technology. In the workplace survey, 60.7% of respondents indicated that they were working either much more or more with computers.

One worker we interviewed has worked at UM/Amherst for 26 years. He talked about how a lot of trades jobs in the physical plant department, where he works, have changed over the years due to technology: "Before, we could go in and actually, directly change things that were happening with the machinery. You can't now. It has to be done now through the computer." He talked about new jobs and fields of employment being created by technological changes, and old jobs being replaced. He also noted that there were fewer jobs overall in the department. In his department, there were 30 workers employed when he started, and there are 12 workers now. The number of management positions, however, has increased. "And we have more work, actually," he says. "[Our department has] more buildings; three new buildings since I started. And we have less people to do them." When asked if fewer employees were being asked to handle the same, or higher, workload, and if technology made that possible, he said, "Well, to be brutally honest, a lot of the work isn't getting done... It's kind of like owning a car and not doing any maintenance on it, never changing the oil. That's what we're running into. So it's a problem."

At one focus group a bookkeeper talked about how her job and office have changed due to technology:

> "When I first came, we were doing everything by hand. All the payables were done by hand. I had five students working for me. Then a couple of years ago, they went to the on-line system. So everything was being done on-line. Then I dropped to having two students working for me. Now they're going towards pro-cards [a new system]... so again, that's less work in my office. Now I barely have enough work for one student! I still have work for myself, but it's not as interesting as it was. It's more all-automated. I don't get to see invoices anymore. They just automatically get paid."

When asked if she liked any of these job changes, she responded:

> "I liked them in the beginning, because then it was a new thing to learn. Something new to do. But it was a lot of actual work. Now that they're doing pro-cards, there is more paperwork and backtracking for me to do, but there is less hands-on type of knowing what's going on."

***Many workers say that they need computer training in order to keep up with their jobs or to be competitive in seeking new jobs.***

Most office workers talked about the need to keep up with computer programs and new technologies. Many said that they have to use their own time and funds to build their competencies. Clerical workers also talked about fear of falling behind in new computer

programs and applications, which would hinder their chances for promotion, pay raises, or new jobs.

At a UM/Amherst focus group, there was a discussion of trends in the workplace, with computers doing more of the work, and much of the work going to students who are more familiar with computers. One person said, "The student will take your position, just to run the computer!"

"Part of my problem with the changing workplace is it isn't changing in terms of distribution of resources," commented one UM/Amherst worker. She talked about going into personal debt to pay for computer training that the university does not offer, and asked why the university wouldn't pay for that training:

> "I'm not getting any training that would help me get a better job," she said. "Even when the workplace changes technologically, they often don't even bother to train me for what's coming, while I can't even keep up with what is already changing in my workplace. I have to spend my own money to get training to keep up with what's going on in my workplace. Then we get two weeks vacation. I use my vacation to study most of the time. I don't go to Florida on my vacation. I need to study, get training, and use my time to keep up with the changing workplace. It seems very classist, because I'm going into debt to keep up and I'm not getting paid much."

"Before, we could go in and actually, directly change things that were happening with the machinery. You can't now. It has to be done now through the computer."

*A tradesworker from UM/Amherst*

***Older workers and those who are not used to electronic equipment have special training needs.***

Similar to the needs newcomers have regarding computer training workers at UM/Amherst (some of whom are themselves non-native speakers) indicated that they need and desire computer training that recognizes their unique situations. Here are some workers' statements about the need for basic computer courses for adult learners:

> "There have been classes like OIT, where you'll have this mini-class for an hour or so, but that's nothing."
>
> "You don't learn a program in an hour!"
>
> "I went to learn how to use a computer, to a computer class, and they had a grad student that has been using a computer his whole life, and he was using words [I didn't know] ...I had not a clue what he was talking about!"

Several years ago, in response to worker requests, LMWEP started a basic computer and writing class. It grew into a follow-up class for workers to get more exposure to using computers. The UM/Amherst adult basic education class also began offering computer training as a basic component. During the course of this research, workers voiced similar requests: longer and more in-depth computer classes than those offered elsewhere on campus, more basic computer training, and an acknowledgement that they didn't grow up with computers the way college students have.

***Because of increased use of computers, there is greater sharing of office work between classified and professional staff. But many clerical workers complained about a lack of higher compensation for increases in their job skills.***

The trend towards greater sharing of office work between classified and professional staff was commented on in both focus groups and interviews with clerical workers. It was noted that supervisors, professors, and professional staff are now doing more of their own correspondence, e-mail memos, and paperwork on the computer. Some of the expectations, therefore, about what clerical duties are and what professional duties are have shifted. Some workers commented on the lack of recognition of their increasing skills.

One worker talked about using her Internet web design skills to create a web site for her department: "I'm learning lots of new things that will enable me to get out and do something else. We have people coming to the university because of the web site that I designed." She spoke about applying for a web designer position at another department on campus: "I got a letter that I didn't even get considered, although I design web pages. I wasn't considered because I don't have a degree. It wasn't said outright, but it was so."

Some workers saw this trend positively. One worker, commenting on the positive aspects of the trend, however, also noted the negative aspects. He noted that this trend was eliminating class distinctions between classified and professional staff in his department. He then went on to say: "It seems like we're doing a good job in getting people to be thinking about their jobs in a different way, but not necessarily compensating them for those changes."

Finally, it is important to note in this section that there might be other reasons for greater sharing of computerized office work. One worker posited that professional staff was assuming increased office duties because the university doesn't want to hire more clerical staff.

Newcomer workers and job seekers and UM/Amherst workers are concerned with the impact of computers and technology on their work lives, on their health, on the level of control and participation they maintain in their jobs, and on the nature of the work that they

will do in the future. Many of these findings reflect the importance of computer training in relation to the changing workplace and workplace literacy

## • Experiences & Treatment of Workers & Jobseekers

What was evident from the job seekers and workers that we spoke with was their desire to seek jobs or move into jobs that offer more respect, pay, or a different kind of challenge. These workers describe a range of satisfaction with the workplace as well as a range of treatment. Some workers, newcomers in particular, talked about the benefits and positive aspects of their jobs: earning money to support their families and using and practicing skills such as English are two examples. All workers identified negative aspects of their work: physically demanding work, lack of control of their schedule, not being able to use all of their skills, lack of respect, and problems with management. For the newcomer workers in particular, the negative experiences fuel a desire to move into better jobs. This group of findings presents a picture of workers' view of their treatment in the workplace as well as the desire for change that these experiences create.

### Newcomer Findings

***Newcomer workers are seeking better jobs.***

Like many native-born people, newcomer workers are seeking better jobs. Many newcomers spoke about wanting a "better job" or a "better future." There are a number of qualities that would define a job as better for these workers. An obvious need for these workers are jobs that provide better higher wages and offer benefits. Many newcomer workers are employed in the service sector, and hold jobs on the lower end of the wage scale. Jobs at this level often do not provide benefits such as vacation, sick time, or health insurance. A number of newcomer workers also spoke about wanting to work in a "better" atmosphere. This better atmosphere could include cleaner and safer physical conditions as well as respect for them as people. Finally, some newcomers would like to use the skills they developed in their home countries to obtain jobs here.

Jobs that aren't challenging can become unsatisfying for the English language learner as much as for the native speaker.

Learners at the ILI and CNA sites work in a variety of jobs. The majority works in the service sector, principally in restaurants and the food service industry. The more unusual jobs held include office or factory work. Newcomer workers express varying degrees of satisfaction with their work. In reviewing statements of workers interviewed, CNA researchers noted that

people expressed some happiness about their jobs. When asked if they were happy with their job, respondents made comments such as the following:

"I think so," replied a young man working as cook, originally from China.
"Yes and no," replied an older-woman waitress, originally from Japan.
"Happy, very happy. I like to make copies. I like all of it. It's good practice," explained a middle-aged woman originally from Russia, working as an office assistant at Center for New Americans.
"Yes, it's not very hard and I practice my English language skills when I talk with people," said a middle-aged woman originally from Taiwan who works as cashier.

The newcomers in our study want to work and are happy to have the opportunity to do so. They earn money to support their family, are able to practice their English, and have a place to apply what is being learned in the classroom. The comments quoted above, however, also point to subtle seeds of discontent with current jobs. The cook from China later talked about his dissatisfaction with working 10 hours a day, six days a week; a schedule that makes it difficult for him to come to school to improve his English. The woman working as a waitress said, "Umm, I'd like to know more about the schedule for working days... Then I would like to have a few more helps so that everybody can work. You don't really have to break your back." The CNA employee was happy with her job, but it is only part time and she has talked about wanting and needing more hours. Other learners at CNA and ILI identified similar problems in the workplace of long hours, low pay, little control of schedule, and physically difficult work. Some learners also spoke about difficulties with their boss or co-workers.

The idea expressed by the cashier that "the job is not very hard" is an interesting one. Jobs that aren't challenging can become unsatisfying for the English language learner as much as for the native speaker. A number of CNA learners mentioned this as a reason for not enjoying their jobs. A woman who worked in the laundry said that the only skill she needs is energy for folding, and another learner spoke of becoming bored with his job as a baker after two years. An ILI learner clearly describes the changes that occur over time for newcomer workers,

> "I think most people work in the job they don't like temporarily. It is easier to use your hands than your brain. I was tired of working in a restaurant so I had a chance to go back to school. It is very hard for me because I don't have a high school diploma. So many people here have a better education than me. Maybe I can do this, if I study hard, and if I can use the computer."

Initially newcomers may be happy to have any kind of job, but eventually they seek better jobs. Higher wages are an important consideration, but it is not just money that motivates

the search for a different job. Often newcomers seek a work environment where they can use their talents and get respect for the work they perform. Newcomers also want to share more of their skills and their ideas in the workplace. Like many other learners, the ILI learner quoted above sees education as a tool for gaining more satisfying and challenging jobs. (See also Immigration Reform Findings around the importance of education.)

***Newcomers are aware that they are treated differently than native-born workers and job seekers and attribute it to discrimination, racism, language bias, or abuse due to problems with legal status.***

The bias that newcomers face in the other parts of their lives (see Immigration Reform Findings) is also experienced in the workplace. Newcomers are identified as different by their appearance or their accent, and treated differently by the native-born people they encounter. Learners used various ideas and terms to name the different treatment by U.S. people and institutions, including discrimination or even racism.

Many people we interviewed used the word discrimination. A learner at ILI, for example, said, "You know people think that they are better than us. I haven't felt much discrimination but I know people who are discriminated [against]." A young mother from Puerto Rico used the stronger word of racism to describe her experience. During her interview at CNA, she spoke about how she believed her inability to find a job was a result of racism. Before she started English classes, she looked for a job in places like McDonalds, Burger King, and factories, but was told that her English was not good enough. She talked in Spanish about her experience in the United States. Her comments are translated below:

> "I imagined the USA differently, not like this. Not only because of the English, but also because of the racism that there is for other people. It's horrible. Sometimes it is the best way to cover things up, 'You don't speak English? It's the language. You can't work.' But in reality it is covering up things, in reality it's racism. They don't want people from other countries. They don't want Hispanic people... It's an excuse. If I have to work with a machine I believe that I don't need English, that machines don't speak any language, that I only have to work well. It doesn't matter if I speak Chinese. But that is the way to get out of the problem most rapidly."

In this woman's analysis, the root of language bias is actually the racism that exists in the United States workplaces and organizations.

Although newcomers are an increasingly important part of the Massachusetts workforce, it remains that some are unable to enter the workplace due to discrimination, language bias, and racism while others feel they must remain in jobs where they experience poor working conditions or illegal treatment.

Undocumented workers face some of the clearest abuses and have the fewest resources for addressing these abuses. An undocumented worker studying at ILI said, "I can't find real work, you know I have to take anything no matter how much they pay. Also I have to accept whatever the boss says because he knows that I really need the job, that's why he pays us less than others." Because of the fear of deportation, undocumented people are afraid to ask for fair treatment or help in difficult situations. Often they are unaware of their rights and that there are ways of securing equal treatment. For more on this see Immigration Reform Findings.

Although newcomers are an increasingly important part of the Massachusetts workforce, it remains that some are unable to enter the workplace due to discrimination, language bias, and racism while others feel they must remain in jobs where they experience poor working conditions or illegal treatment.

**UM/Amherst Worker Findings**

***Workers in many job classifications experience a lack of respect in the workplace. Disrespectful treatment and discrimination based on class, age, education, race, nationality, and gender have a negative effect on workers on the job.***

The issue of respect was a concern for workers in many job classifications, and the treatment they experienced was often attributed to classism or perceived differences in power or privilege on campus. They felt their job classification or the type of work they do affects assessment of their job performance, access to education, and subsequently on their ability to achieve personal, workplace, and education goals. Many workers felt that faculty and students were accorded more respect than classified staff, and that super-visors often acted superior and disrespectful to classified staff. In the workplace survey, 61.9% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "In my department, faculty and professionals are treated with more respect than classified workers." Fifteen-and-a-half percent disagreed or disagreed strongly with that statement. Also, 55.4% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I feel that I'm affected by classism at the workplace" and 23.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

"And if we manage to get promoted, let's not forget our roots, not overlook the fact that ageism, sexism, classism – all the 'isms' – are happening right now, in our workplace."

*A UM/Amherst worker*

Some workers also noted a lack of respect by office workers for service workers employed in areas such as food services, housing, and custodial work. This situation is also reflected in an ongoing tension between AFSCME and USA/MTA bargaining unit members. The clerical workers represented by USA/MTA are perceived by many AFSCME service workers to have better working conditions, treatment, and compensation.

Lack of respect affected w rkers' morale and attitudes towards other workers, supervisors, administration, faculty and staff, and many workers spoke about their resulting feelings of anger, hurt, and powerlessness. Many of the UM/Amherst researchers involved in this study, as well as participants, commented on ways that this demoralization affected job performance, attitudes towards university administration, and relationships with other members of the campus community. Some examples from focus groups follow:

English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) learners were interviewed in a UM/Amherst focus group, and they talked about a pervasive attitude of disrespect on campus. They talked about a lack of respect by students for their dorms, the mess they create, lack of respect for the maintainers who clean up after them, and how the situation has gotten worse in the last few years. They also talked about how their supervisors check up on them more than on native English speaking maintainers and they feel less trust: "If you not leave the door locked, if somebody come and you do not do what supposed to, he will find out and give you warning. Very difficult... You're under a very big light. They keep the eye on you."

Respect is not a new issue in the changing workplace, but it is one that the university's administration has tried to address in recent years. A campus-wide campaign for civility along with diversity, problem-solving, and communications classes and training offered by LMWEP and the university's Training & Development office have actively attempted to increase respect and equal treatment for all members of the campus community. The experiences related by workers in this study, however, indicate that disrespect remains a demoralizing phenomenon for many workers.

The roots of disrespectful treatment for many workers are the prejudicial attitudes that stem from racism, sexism, ageism, classism, rankism, and other discriminatory belief systems. A UM/Amherst research team member, talking about some of his findings among co-workers in an interview, stated:

> "We're hearing people talk a lot about rankism, classism, sexism, ageism. Ageism is very important because they're bringing in young people as professionals and eliminating classified positions and then they're having the new people dependent upon the established classified administrator, who's not getting any more money."

Another worker said:

> "And if we manage to get promoted, let's not forget our roots, not overlook the fact that ageism, sexism, classism – all the 'isms' – are happening right now, in our work-

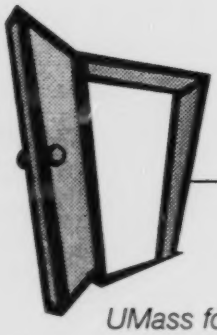
> place. Older clerical workers who are bright, smart, competent and quick are being turned down for the younger worker who can be controlled – those fresh out of college, or should I say, often right out of this university. USA/MTA and AFSCME workers are being turned down for professional jobs because no matter how smart and how educated they are, if they chose to work in what is on this campus a lower class than the professional class, then they are punished by having to stay there."

Many workers spoke about discrimination in benefits based on job classification. One worker said,

> "All workers should receive the same amount of time off – meaning sick time, vacation time and so on. Professionals on the UM/Amherst campus or anywhere else are not more deserving of a longer vacation than the 03s [unbenefitted workers] sweeping floors in the Campus Center or Whitmore, who are hired because they can't speak English and are willing to take the low-paying jobs. They should not get more time than the clerical workers who are now required to be skilled in practically every single thing across the spectrum, including management, personnel management, computer savvy, a strong grip of the language – whatever language."

At another UM/Amherst focus group, there was some discussion of lack of respect based on difference and "isms." One worker talked about having a supervisor much younger than he who, even though he has far less experience in the trades or on the job, does not treat him respectfully, and the lack of respectful treatment he experiences. Some workers talked about lack of respect from students on campus, from supervisors, and from professional staff or office workers. One person said, "The maintainers sometimes are better educated than the people that are telling them how to do their jobs. And they look down on us."

The "isms" noted by UM/Amherst workers are not new phenomena at the workplace, but workers have become more conscious and articulate about their effects. While most of the workers we heard from spoke about the discriminatory effects that these attitudes had on them or their co-workers, others noted how they have become aware of some of their own



## MEET A RESEARCHER

***Linda Wallack**, a researcher on the UM/LMWEP team, has been working at UMass for the past seven years, in numerous departments. She has a degree in Fine Arts and considers her artwork to be her primary work, although UMass is her "day job". The classism she encounters daily at UMass is both distressing and disturbing. She joined the Changes Project in an effort to connect with others who felt similarly about the injustices in the treatment of the clerical support staff at UM/Amherst.*

unconscious discriminatory attitudes. Classism was talked about more openly than the other "isms." Many workers noted that while they had not seen a decrease in classism, they had noticed an increase in awareness of the existence of classism on campus.

***Management styles that utilize fear, distrust, intimidation, blame, and punishment were often noted.***

Despite the university's stated egalitarian management style, many workers noted that managerial attitudes and styles are slow to change. Some workers discussed the prevalence of management styles that aim to influence workers through manipulative techniques such as intimidation, threats, punishment, and fear (sometimes referred to as 'toxic management') even though the university espouses a management ethic that is much more democratic and supportive of team decision-making in the workplace. One worker said:

> "We still have toxic management. We still have top-down commands and top-down instruction. There are still large gaps in the chain of command and there's much confusion that's not necessarily verbal, because everyone's being sweet-talked. But the reality is, so far as I see it they have a heck of a long way to go. I don't see it happening before the year 2000 and perhaps not before the year 2050. And by then, who knows if any of us will be working. Perhaps it will just be all done by machine."

In a focus group, several workers talked about the gap between administration philosophies that encourage egalitarian relationships, teamwork, and investing in employees through training and staff development and their experience of toxic management and hierarchical practices at the supervisor and department level. One worker said,

> "I believe one of the problems we have here at the University of Massachusetts [at Amherst] is that while all of the positive information sort of floats around at the core of the university, the people in here who have been hired and who hold power, whether they be at the departmental level or wherever else, they are heavily invested in the prerequisites of the hierarchy and the petty privileges they enjoy. They are therefore unwilling to abandon these things to embrace the more enlightened philosophies because it means giving up something of value to them."

Members of the UM/Amherst research team have met with organizational development and training coordinators to discuss these issues and to investigate ways that workers can become involved in worker-led and classified staff peer trainings. It's hoped that this will help foster more team-based management styles that will improve the quality of work and workplace satisfaction.

***Many workers said that they felt there were barriers in hiring and promotion that left them trapped in classified positions.***

Discussion about hiring practices was wide ranging. Workers used terms like nepotism, targeted positions, glass ceiling barriers to advancement, and the old-boy network to describe obstacles they perceived in the workplace at UM/Amherst, which limit workers' options for acquiring new jobs or training for different positions new. Many workers also reported that they did not understand some of the contractual hiring practices, such as seniority, bumping, and preferential hiring for certain groups within bargaining units, and that these practices served as barriers to job advancement.

"They talk about the opaque ceiling for women, but there's also the blue ceiling between classified and professional staff."

*A UM/Amherst clerical worker*

Not unique to UM/Amherst, preferential hiring practices are duplicated in many bureaucracies and large institutions across the country and throughout the world. Some of these hiring practices were designed to redress past discrimination, such as targeting certain positions for candidates from under-represented groups. But most of the workers who were interviewed said that preferential hiring practices also serve to screen out qualified applicants, keeping many service workers out of office jobs, and many office workers out of professional positions.

At one UM/Amherst focus group, there was a discussion about hiring practices. One worker said that you had to have a relative or know someone on campus that would give you a personal recommendation to get a job at UM/Amherst. Most of the participants in the group took some exception to that comment. But when the worker asked how many of the people present had relatives who were working for UM/Amherst, almost all of the workers raised their hands. Some of the possible reasons for this were discussed: Several people mentioned that UM/Amherst is the largest employer in the region, so it's not surprising that many of the people who work there are related. Another said that if he had to make a choice among a number of equally qualified applicants, he would probably hire the person he knew something about through a relative.

Many workers talked about their perception that some jobs, while they are supposed to be open to the most qualified applicant, seem to be slotted for a specific candidate who has been pre-selected by management. One person talked about sitting on a hiring committee:

> "You're on a committee to interview a candidate applying for a supervisory position. You like the person who has it all, the whole ball of wax. However, a woman over there in Room #3 has the job without you even knowing it."

Another worker said:

> "I think where I got a sour taste in my mouth about it was after going to endless interviews for endless jobs and having an interviewer say to me, 'Gee, I don't know why they had you come back because this job is taken.' Are they trying to breed anger on this campus? What is so wrong in saying it's a targeted position so folks don't have to waste their time interviewing for it!"

Clerical workers in particular talked about difficulties in getting professional jobs that they were qualified for, even with the requisite education and experience. One worker called this phenomenon the "blue ceiling:"

> "They talk about the opaque ceiling for women, but there's also the blue ceiling between classified and professional staff. If you ask anyone who's been on this campus for any length of time, you will understand very clearly a painful truth. If you start out as a classified employee, the only way you're going to get a professional position is to leave the campus and come back as a professional. Otherwise you are bound and stuck."

Another worker said, "I just want to do my job and I try to do the best I can. But there's no room for expansion. I think a lot of people would say that."

***Many workers feel the limits that these obstacles to workplace advancement place on their plans and hopes for job growth and advancement. Such practices limit their ability to move into other jobs and job training at the university.***

Workers described a number of changes that threaten or eliminate jobs and therefore affect morale. Downsizing, privatization, jobs that are contracted outside the workplace, use of nonbenefited, nonunionized, and temporary workers, and hiring off-campus to fill positions were given as examples.

Job instability and privatization have been some of the main topics raised as barriers at work. At UM/Amherst, privatization refers to the policy of the state government to turn jobs and services over to the private sector. Workers are affected by the threat of privatization of food services, textbook services, campus stores, and Campus Center services. The university is closing down its dental

This is the story of one newcomer who faced the challenges of learning a new language and new skills in a new job market and a new country. It is the story of a learner at CNA, but learners at ILI and workers at UM/Amherst have faced many of her challenges as well.

"They treated me different because English is not my first language. And one day they told me that my English was not good enough..." Mrs. Xiao said, while sharing her work experiences in the US.
At present, Mrs. Xiao is a part-time restaurant worker. But a year ago, she tried to find a full time job as a clerk in a bank and was fired because of her low-level English skills. Mrs. Xiao argues, "I can't answer the phone because my English is limit.

[continued]

The people talk very fast and that was the problem but I'm doing well the paper job... I'm still wonder why they don't let me work just with the paper work".

At her new job in a Chinese restaurant, she has to answer the phone and use the computer, which she has to read fast too. Although she still has problems with the English language, and has to tolerate people who do not like to wait a long time, Mrs. Xiao feels comfortable with this job. As she explained, "they know that I'm Chinese and here I'm not 'different' ".

When Mrs. Xiao was promoted to a full-time position at the restaurant, she left her English classes. A few months later she understood the need for more English skills. She asked for her part-time job again, to be able to take English classes. For her, this was a hard

(continued)

services, and health services have been under review. While not immediately at risk, many AFSCME union members in custodial and physical plant positions spoke about fears that the privatization trend would affect their jobs as well. As one worker in a focus group said, "The real battle is whether we should be a place that generates considerable revenue so the administration can spend it wherever they want to." Many workers are very aware of the goals of the governor and several state legislators to make public services a source of private profit, and many recent appointees to the university's Board of Trustees have indicated their support for these goals.

Workers also discussed the number of jobs that go to off-campus, nonunion workers. One worker in a focus group said, "You notice how on the yellow sheet [a weekly posting from Human Resources of classified positions that are open], week after week, Grade 11, Grade 12, and even Grade 9s are being hired off campus. I mean, you can't tell me that there aren't people here, at lower paying jobs, that wouldn't die to get one of those jobs."

There has also been discussion among workers that the university has been hiring more and more "03" classified workers in recent years: jobs that come with no benefits, no job security, and no union protection. A worker stated, "My husband has worked in health services and what they've been doing up there is just hiring 03 employees and getting around it that way And I think that really is a disgrace."

The threat of privatization is a recent change at the UM/Amherst workplace, but loss of jobs and job security are recurrent workplace issues. For the past two years, the Massachusetts economy has seen a growth in jobs, but public sector jobs are being threatened by the private sector and privatization policies. As workers perceive their jobs to be at risk, they report feelings of demoralization and lack of support for their jobs and services.

Workers and job seekers are very clear about the barriers they face as they seek to improve their work lives. These barriers are often not mentioned or connected to current discussions about how the ways work and workplaces are changing. Workers we heard from suggest that these are the issues that need to change.

**Reconsidering a Different Perspective on the Changing Workplace**

As mentioned in the Changing Workplace Context section, questions are being raised about claims that work and workplaces are changing. For the most part, our research looked at the changing workplace through the lens of the popular perspective that work is changing in terms of the new skills workers need and the lack of workers with sufficient skills. It felt important to us to begin to push our analysis further by raising some thoughts about the ways our findings do not always match the popular perspective. To that end we offer the following thoughts. It would be our hope that further research would extend them.

**Are there other ways in which workplaces need to change?**

When we looked at the barriers that workers named we saw that some of the barriers are widely referred to in popular discussions about changing work and workplaces (e.g. improving language skills and technology skills). And workers themselves named these as important needs to address. Other barriers that they mentioned such as racism, sexism, and ageism, which are not commonly referred to when workplace change is being discussed, were identified as not changing very much, or changing very slowly.

**What are the skills and abilities that workers need today?**

Many of the workers we heard from (both UM/Amherst workers and newcomers) are in favor of training and clearer paths to future career and job advancement. Yet this is often not available, or their efforts at gaining it are thwarted. These workers were willing and interested in upgrading and enhancing their skills. This leads us to wonder whether a revision of how worker potential is seen and measured is in order.

In addition, workers we talked with experienced discrimination based on their limited language or writing skills and sometimes felt stereotyped as unskilled or unintelligent based on these assessments. These workers often had skills that were not recognized or used in their workplaces. This too raises questions as to whether another look at worker potential is in order.

**What is the effect of trying to change workplaces?**

Despite work technology not changing greatly, some of the UM/Amherst workers we heard from shared stories of how the atmosphere and management

decision because she will have less income and she has to support her family. "Is not easy to work and go to school at the same time" she said. "It's hard... sometimes I was not able to go to the English class because I had to work... It's not easy".

Mrs. Xiao is a persistent person and her goals are very clear. When she was in her country, she owned a store. She sold women's clothes and she learned how to run a business. Today, to improve herself she is taking computer classes, has finished her English courses and has become a US citizen. She hopes to be able to get a better job and go to college. As she explains, "It is always good to improve yourself and take today the chance that in the past you didn't have."

The story of this woman illustrates the experiences and struggles of many newcomers

*(continued)*

in the United States workplace. They face the multiple challenges of working in a different language and new context where they are often viewed and treated as different. As they move through these challenges, newcomers also present a picture of persistence and courage. They work to achieve their goals – sometimes holding to their original pictures and sometimes modifying them – and support their families.

of the workplace has changed. In particular some describe points of conflict with their colleagues when some of the hallmarks of the changing workplace were instituted, including more egalitarian relationships among workers of different rank, a shift to organization by team, and some training programs.

We again recommend Hull (1997) as a good collection of research on this topic.

# Recommendations from the Changes Project

The following recommendations have developed out of the Changes Project investigation of the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work on the lives of those we spoke with and heard from. This study's purpose was to paint an accurate picture of the effects of these three issues on adult learners working to reach their education goals. The recommendations therefore focus on the ways in which educators and learners can shape the delivery of education services to support learners who face one or more of these issues as they pursue their education goals. Several recommendations for workplaces are made with examples specific to the University of Massachusetts/Amherst as a workplace and provider of workplace education programming. We suggest that they have applicability to other large workplaces committed to providing educational opportunities to their employees. Finally, a number of recommendations are directed to legislators and policy makers regarding welfare reform and immigration reform.

We encourage educational policy makers to look closely at the education-focused recommendations as they craft and refine education policy and funding plans. Support on the state and national level for education services that incorporate these recommendations would be powerful.

These recommendations are organized by audience: Educators, Program Administrators, Learners, Workplaces, and Legislators and Policy Makers.

## *Recommendations for Adult Basic Education, Workplace Education and Community College Educators and Program Administrators*

- Provide flexible programming that meets the scheduling needs of your learners, whether they are welfare recipients, immigrants, workers, or some combination of the above. Recognize and be responsive to learners' needs and help them meet the competing demands of parenting, schoolwork, and welfare, immigration and workplace regulations and requirements. Consider accelerated programming, weekend and evening classes, and distance-learning opportunities as means to reach learners with limited availability and multiple scheduling constraints.

- Provide specialized counseling and academic services for learners that are tailored to their needs as current or former welfare recipients, immigrants, and/or workers. For example, create a counseling position in your program or institution and fill it with someone knowledgeable about the issues learners face. As an institution,

create connections with organizations such as local DTA offices, INS offices, unions, employers, legal services offices, and welfare, immigration, or workers' rights groups. Develop ways and systems to help learners to connect with organizations that can assist them in negotiating these systems. Develop ways to provide learners with accurate and relevant information about changing welfare and immigration legislation, changing workplace trends, and their rights and responsibilities as immigrants, workers, or welfare recipients.

- When assessing learners' needs, look beyond their literacy or academic needs. Recognize that people's lives and their needs for support are complex and constantly changing. Understand that people's educational achievement may often be affected by situations that have little to do with education. To better meet your learners' needs, ask questions that will help you understand the complexities of their lives. Assess the supports they have in place, the supports they provide for others, and the critical supports they lack. Developing this understanding can give you:
  - the information you need to intervene on behalf of your learners, provide them with appropriate supports, and refer them to supports that may greatly increase their chances at academic success;
  - knowledge about your learners that can help you develop programs, policies and curricula relevant to their lives, responsive to their needs, and which makes use of their interests, knowledge and skills.

- Involve learners and graduates in the administrative and decision-making processes of the organization. Listen to what they have to say. Learners and graduates are a valuable, often underutilized source of information. They can help develop support services, programs, and curricula that truly meet the needs and interests of the people your organization serves.

- Assist learners in accessing accurate and relevant information about the issues they face. Provide information on support agencies and organizations that can assist people in negotiating the systems or bureaucracies that affect them the most (such as immigration, welfare, workplace, and health care systems) and in understanding and their rights and responsibilities. When possible, identify a position in your agency to communicate directly with the welfare and immigration agencies, as well as the support agencies. Where possible, provide supports to learners directly (such as childcare and transportation services or vouchers, mentors or peer tutors, and release or flex time for workers).

- Provide supports that will prepare learners to get jobs or to find better jobs. Make connections with local employers and industries and career centers or employment/training centers. Or, in the case of an education program within a workplace, make connections with the human resources department and the training department. Create a local job postings book. Help learners learn about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Find ways to provide sufficient training on computers, which can serve both as a means of gathering information about jobs and careers and as a tool learners can use in many of today's jobs. When possible, consider creating jobs for learners within your organization where they can practice and learn transferable workplace skills. This might include work-study positions and internships.

- Develop curricula that is learner centered and builds literacy skills while creating opportunities for learners to investigate, address, and act on issues critical to their lives. Develop curricula that gives learners the opportunity to investigate and reflect upon issues critical to their lives and to see the broader contexts of these issues. Create avenues for learners to act upon what they learn, reach beyond the boundaries of the classroom, and bring about changes.

- Develop programming that links to next steps learners might take once they complete their work at your school. For example, for ESOL learners this might include links to a transitional or pre-academic class for learners who complete their English classes but are not yet academically ready to take college-level classes.

- Create opportunities for learners to develop and improve their leadership skills. Help learners strengthen their ability to express themselves and develop advocacy skills. Acquiring these transferable skills strengthens not only individual learners, but their ability to help others.

- Develop a supportive, respectful atmosphere in the classroom in which all learners can participate. Work with learners to break down stereotypes and myths about welfare recipients, newcomers, and workers. Join with your learners in the challenges they are facing; encourage mutual respect in the classroom.

"This project has given me that ability [to be a reflective teacher] because you really have to listen when you're doing research. It's helped me to let go of... being in charge of how the research goes. Learning to do that has changed me – it's changed the way I think about how knowledge gets made. It's really different when you do it in a group. What you come up with is much richer."

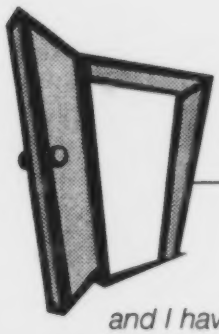
*Site Research Facilitator*

## *Recommendations for Learners*

These recommendations are offered by the research team members to their fellow learners.

- Find out about your rights and responsibilities as welfare recipients, immigrants, workers, citizens, and/or newcomers to this country and about the benefits for which you are eligible. Know that you have a legal right to accurate information about your rights, your responsibilities, and the resources and benefits you are eligible to receive. Ask questions and continue to ask them until you get the information you need in a form and a language that is understandable to you. If you are being treated in an unfair or illegal manner, you can seek help.

- Know that you are not alone. There are many groups across the state working on issues that are important to immigrants, welfare recipients, and workers. Joining with others can help you in many ways: it can give you access to information and resources that may help you and your family; it can teach you about your rights; it can give you a more powerful voice than you have on your own; it can help you to understand that your circumstances are not unique; and it may also give you the opportunity to change your circumstances.



## MEET A RESEARCHER

*My name is **Janet Jimenez**. I came from the Dominican Republic. I am married and I have 3 big nice sons. I work at the Center for New Americans. I like animals. My favorite hobbies are going shopping, eating at restaurants and decorating my house. I like to know more about what happens in the world.*

*About the Changes Project: it was wonderful. I think this project help me a lot. I think I have improved my English. I got confidence. I had the opportunity to know important people (like when I went to Boston). I had the opportunity to do presentations.*

*This project helps other teams to know more about immigrants and how they are feeling. We know more about welfare, immigration and workplaces. When I said I never know what will happen in the future about this project but now I know a lot and the other teams do too. It was interesting because all were involved. Now American people understand more about the different cultures.*

*Janet represented CNA's Northampton site on the CNA research team. During the period of the research she attended CNA's Advanced Intermediate class. She also teaches in the Northampton Computer Lab.*

- Seek out opportunities to investigate issues of importance to you with fellow learners and your teacher. This is a powerful means to ground your learning in the issues and concerns that are important to you and your classmates. This kind of investigation not only provides information and support, but will also allow you to develop and practice skills you need for future schooling and work.

- Find ways to become involved in the school you attend. The school you attend has the potential to be a strong source of support for you and your fellow learners. Look for ways to make connections and to work together with other learners and teachers to make it an even stronger community. This might include becoming a member of an advisory board, volunteering, or helping to develop new curricula and/or programming.

- Let your voice be heard in school. Let teachers and program administrators know what your needs are, what your circumstances are, and the strengths and talents that you bring to the program.

## *Recommendations for Workplaces*

(These recommendations have examples specific to the University of Massachusetts/Amherst as a workplace. We suggest they have applicability to other workplaces.)

- Provide support for employees to get onto a career track. This would include instituting career ladders, or other means of supporting worker advancement within the workplace. At UM/Amherst, LMWEP initiated the formation of a labor/management committee with representatives from the AFSCME bargaining unit and managerial representatives appointed by the university to study and implement career ladders programs for members of the AFSCME bargaining unit. A similar program is in the developmental stage for clerical workers who are members of the USA/MTA bargaining unit. Some of the initial objectives of these career ladder programs are to provide training and support for employees who want to advance to more responsible positions within their bargaining unit, to offer employee education and advising services, to survey workers about the types of career ladders program and education and training support they desire, and to provide training and support around technological changes in the workplace and training in administrative systems and computer applications such as People Soft.

- Make sure that support for education and training is voiced through the workplace's mission, policies, and management, and is relevant to the issues of workplace changes. It is important to make sure that policies are supported and implemented by mid-level management and direct supervisors. One of the stumbling blocks to workplace education and training programs that is most often mentioned by employees, employers, educators, and job training programs is lack of support and resources for such programs at the mid-level managerial level. When education and training missions are not implemented, or implementation is uneven throughout the organization, employees seek policies and programs to correct that situation. At UM/Amherst, workers have noted that the university's workplace education and training mission and goals are not practiced in many departments and by many supervisors, and they would like better support for employee learners and implementation by supervisors.

- Recognize that newcomers are an increasingly important part of the workforce. Look for ways to uncover and use their skills, rather than seeing them as lacking in skills or deficient because they speak another language or come from another culture.

- Include frontline workers in Workplace Quality Improvement trainings as trainers and as contributors to training curricula. At UM/Amherst, workers would like to "make work work" by being part of programs such as Workplace Quality Improvement trainings, where they would participate as trainers and as contributors to training curricula. Workers would like the university to develop a culture of mutual support, participation, and teambuilding. They would like to participate in programs that improve their worklife, that foster creativity, involve them in decision-making, and enhance their personal effectiveness at work.

- Institute a worker education support center for employees that provides information, referrals, support groups, and resource networks throughout the university. A worker education assistance and support program could serve as ombudsman for employee education services, a network for resources throughout the university, and provide support for worker learners. Many UM/Amherst employees say that they came to work at UM/Amherst in order to have access to education and training benefits that the university offers. But many workers state that they are not sure how to navigate the educational resources and opportunities that exist, or how to actually use these benefits. Obtaining access to classes and educational programs is difficult for many workers, and application of release time policies for education and training is uneven and problematic.

- Confront issues of difference and diversity in the workplace, particularly with regard to eradicating classism and rankism in higher education by cultivating a climate of respect, equality, and dignity for all who work in that educational system. UM/Amherst workers are vocal about the need to eradicate classism and rankism in higher education by cultivating a climate of respect, equality, and dignity for all who work in the educational system. Rankism is a form of discrimination that is particularly endemic to bureaucracies such as the military and higher education, where privileges and respect are bestowed according to a person's "rank" in the organization. Frontline workers, like freshmen, see themselves at or near the bottom of the university's hierarchy. Discriminatory practices and beliefs need to be confronted, eradicated, and replaced by a workplace culture and university community that respects and welcomes the diversity and contributions of all of its members.

- Support labor/management committees that have frontline staff representation when any changes to working conditions are under review by the employer. For example, at UM/Amherst, the state government's policy of privatization – contracting out jobs, departments, and services to private companies – is an imminent threat to jobs. Workers are asking for representation on committees that are considering termination of state-managed services in areas such as food services, health services, printing services, text book services, campus stores, and Campus Center services.

## *Recommendations for Legislators and Policy Makers*

Regarding both welfare legislation and policies, and legislation, policies and programs affecting immigrants and other newcomers:

- Insist that welfare caseworkers and INS workers develop respectful working relationships with their clients. Offer training to support caseworkers and others to build working relationships that honor the basic human right of fair treatment. Help workers develop their ability to assess the complex web of support in the lives of clients and the ways in which the agency (welfare or immigration) can meaningfully connect its benefits with those supports. Also offer diversity awareness training, including recognition of cultural difference and educational diversity.

- Provide adequate services and accurate information in the languages that clients speak. Develop systems that ensure that accurate information, updated forms,

fee schedules, and regulations are available to individuals. Work with the local community to create mechanisms for clients of multiple language backgrounds to get information and services. Create linkages in communities with other service providers to assist the process of information dissemination.

Regarding welfare legislation and policies:

- Enact welfare policies that are responsive to the diverse and changing needs of all welfare recipients. Such policies would recognize the different needs individuals have, support people in their efforts to become self-sufficient and recognize the importance of remaining in school long enough to gain the skills necessary to find and keep living wage jobs.

- Allow education and training to count toward the twenty-hour work requirement. This would include enrollment in adult basic education programs (both literacy and GED preparation), vocational programs, community and four-year college programs. The purpose of the work requirement is to give welfare recipients the job-related skills and experience they need in order to move from welfare to work and become self-sufficient. For some recipients, a job or volunteer position will give them these skills. But others will benefit much more from education, such as literacy programming, English language programming, a certificate program, or a college degree. Learners who have to drop out of such education programs lose access to the skills they need to find and keep jobs that will move them out of poverty.

- Create more effective policies by seeking information from the people most affected by the welfare system. Meet and talk with current and former welfare recipients, including those for whom welfare reform has been highly problematic.

- Enact policies that support and encourage fathers to take responsibility for their children. Such policies would acknowledge the financial and practical roles fathers can play.

# How We Did Our Work

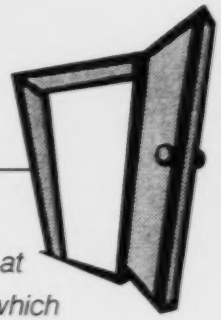
This section is about how the Changes Project conducted its research. It describes our underlying philosophy as well as specific methods and activities we used. We talk about the various stages of the research process including instrument development, data gathering, and analysis. We also talk about how we worked together, within our teams, and as a project. Participation – both philosophically and practically – was central to our work. Throughout this section we highlight the ways in which participation played out, how it helped to strengthen what we did, and how it helped to ensure that the findings were grounded in learners' realities.

## *Philosophy*

We know from the literature on participatory education that when adults in an education program are engaged in investigating issues that affect their lives, it strengthens motivation, helps create meaningful and relevant curriculum, and provides the opportunity for pre-existing skills and expertise to be used. We know from the literature on participatory action research that the engagement of those individuals most directly affected by the issue under investigation brings an often-unheard perspective and that the data gathered is more likely to have validity within its context. In addition, the process itself may lead to the strengthening of the very skills and knowledge necessary to creating meaningful changes. These principles are at the core of this study and our goal to engage adult learners in understanding the three issues and their effects on learning.

## *Assumptions and Beliefs*

The fields of participatory action research and participatory education informed our work. We drew from these fields initially to establish a foundation for the work and to ground



### MEET A RESEARCHER

***Ann Scott*** *was the site research facilitator for the Mentor Program at Holyoke Community College as well as the Coordinator of the Mentor Program, which she started in 1993 to provide support for ABE learners who are making a transition to college. Ann is also a doctoral student in the Language, Literacy and Culture Program at UMass/Amherst and is writing a dissertation, partly based on the Changes Project, that explores metaphors about education, welfare reform, and women's lives. Ann is a 51 year-old white woman who speaks English as her first language and Spanish as her second.*

*"My work with the Changes Project has enriched my life in emotional, social, political, intellectual, and spiritual ways. I am thoroughly convinced of the multiple and far-reaching benefits of participatory action research, as a powerful method for generating and accessing knowledge, for empowering participants, for fostering dialogue between groups of people who otherwise would not have access to each other, and for transforming institutions."*

ourselves in relevant theory and methodology. We also used them for guidance when we made changes in our original plans, to enhance our learning, to widen and deepen our scope, to search for clarity when we were confused, and to serve as a touchstone. Our underlying assumptions, and many of our values and beliefs in relationship to this project, are strongly influenced and guided by these two areas of thought.

Our beliefs and assumptions spanned two arenas; first, those informing the way research is conducted (e.g. why we chose to do participatory research). Second, those that inform the ways research and inquiry connect to education and learning (e.g. the processes of inquiry, sense-making, analysis, and public presentation as pathways to educational achievement).

The following are key assumptions and beliefs that influenced *the way research was conducted* in this project:

- Research conducted in partnership with those directly affected by the issues becomes a process through which we learn and hear from those in the best position to know and in the best position to act on what they know.
- Adults learners have a wide range of expertise derived from their particular experiences and contexts, and are in the best position to articulate their knowledge as it relates to them and their communities.

We came to this project believing that the adult learners facing the issues of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing workplace have knowledge about those issues and their impact. This knowledge can help teachers, education programs, and policy makers respond to the impact these issues have on the lives and educational achievement of learners. We believed an effective means of accessing this knowledge is to engage with learners as co-researchers. Further, we felt that through this process those individuals whose voices are rarely heard by policy-makers, teachers and program administrators in education programs, gain both the means and the opportunity to speak out and work towards meaningful change. The work of educator and researcher Patricia Maguire supports our philosophy. She writes: "If ordinary people have access to certain basic tools and opportunities, they are capable of critical reflection and analysis. Given this premise, the existence of reciprocal, empathic adult relationships between the researcher and members of the group is no longer an obstacle to the creation of knowledge but, rather, facilitates efforts to come to a better understanding of a given reality." (Maguire, 1987, p. 38).

Participatory action research is an inclusive research strategy. It provides a means by which those not normally invited to engage in research or in formal knowledge production can be

included. While definitions for these terms differ, the more generally agreed upon defining characteristics are:

- Members of a community, often an oppressed community, identify a problem to investigate.
- They collect and analyze information and act upon the problem to find solutions.
- The process is profoundly connected with social change.
- The process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in people of their own resources and can mobilize them for self-reliant development.
  (Selener, 1997)

Selener's (1997) characteristics of participatory action research begin to make evident the links between the ways in which research is conducted and the ways research and inquiry connect to education and learning. Peter Park's (1998) work on participatory research extends this connection. He outlines three forms of knowledge that can result from participatory research: ***representational, relational,*** and ***reflective.*** He defines representational as both functional and interpretative. Representational knowledge provides explanation and creates understanding in that it answers both the 'how' and the 'what and who' questions. He defines relational knowledge as related to the relationships among people. Relational knowledge is connective knowledge in that it answers a community's questions about the ways in which they are linked and inter-connected. Finally, he defines reflective knowledge as emancipatory. Reflective knowledge clarifies values in that it answers the 'what for' questions.

As with all research, the generation of knowledge is paramount. Participatory action research affords access to these three diverse and powerful forms of knowledge that are connected and linked with learning and understanding. Our research assumptions helped us to implement a project that was meaningful for all participants, generated solid information, and further shaped ideas about classroom practice.

The following assumptions and beliefs informed ***the ways in which research and inquiry connect to education and learning*** in this project:

- Research is a process of learning, generating knowledge, building skills and capacities (including strengthening voice and the ability to express ourselves and advocate for ourselves), and taking action to make desired changes.
- Social change begins with personal change – the personal and the political are connected.

We all came to this project as researchers, educators and as learners believing that the research process is a learning process. We believed the value in this research project consisted not only in the end results of the study – the findings and recommendations – but also in the process of doing the research, of seeing the research work as an education opportunity. Building on Freirian principles, we recognize that it is through "praxis," a process of action and reflection, that transformation occurs (Freire, 1970, p.68). We believe that reflection on learner concerns in the classroom is essential for learner success. In participatory education approaches, literacy is not seen as a set of skills, but rather a process. In addition, literacy is not divorced from what people do with it and how it is used in their daily lives, at home, at the workplace, in their communities. Participatory education is based on a "faith in people's existing knowledge as a starting point." (Archer & Cottingham, 1996, p.15).

Because we believe literacy is connected to daily lives, the personal lives of learners, we see it as being critically connected to the larger social and political lives of individuals and groups of individuals. The process of investigation, the process of reflection, and the process of relational and reflective knowledge creation links social change with personal change. The educational programs that learners are engaged in at the five participating programs (literacy, GED, transition to college, workplace education) is not set or fixed, but is located in the realities of their lives. As educator Concha Delgado-Gaitan articulates, "There are no fixed formulas that lead to... literacy and empowerment, only possibilities located in our perception and understanding of the conditions in which we find ourselves. And through collective engagement, we find meaning and potentiality to resolve whatever situations confront us." (1996, p.133.)

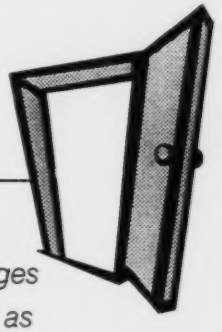
## *Continued Reflection on Our Assumptions and Beliefs*

In the course of work we found it necessary to stop and reflect on these beliefs and assumptions. It is worthwhile to comment on our most ubiquitous questions: "Who are the participants?" and "What 'counts' as action?"

Participation and action are two key elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR). In PAR, participation is central because it is rooted in a belief that those affected most directly by the issue being investigated know the most, or know uniquely about the effects. Participation is the center point in the investigation and often cited as the essential and only valid starting point. In our research, the question of participation was complex. The original shaping question: "What is the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing workplace on the learning and achievement of adult learners?" did not originate with learners. This question came from teachers and program administrators.

The subsequent questions that enabled in-depth inquiry into the impact of these issues did, however, originate from the learners engaged as research team members. Perhaps, in strict readings of "ideal" participatory action research, our process would not meet the definition. And yet, learners engaged in this research project did shape the investigating questions, conduct the investigation and analysis, and frame the recommendations. In order to gain the information necessary to support teachers, programs and policy makers in their efforts to provide effective education services in the face of these three issues, we shaped our participatory research approaches to accommodate a teacher/program originated question with a participatory approach to investigation. Perhaps this is one of the places of compromise between participatory action research/participatory research approaches and more traditional approaches. Perhaps it also suggest that the boundaries between par and participatory education have not yet been fully explored, that there is room to expand definitions as new contexts create new processes. It was most certainly a place of deep and repeated questioning and one that we would suggest merits further consideration by others engaged in this kind of investigation.

The second question that we revisited often throughout the project was: "What counts as action?" Recalling Selener (1997), action in participatory action research is strongly linked to social change. In the case of this project, we struggled to understand the ways in which action and social change connect to the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace on adult learners. Is it a form of social change to alter teacher understanding of learners' lives, and subsequently to change classroom practice in ways that better



## MEET A RESEARCHER

***Alex Risley Schroeder*** *was the project coordinator for the Changes Project. Alex is a thirty-six year-old white woman who speaks English and who, as a result of this project, will learn to speak Spanish and to cook Thai food. Alex has worked at Holyoke Community College at the Western Regional Support Center for the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support for the past four years. She has over twelve years of diverse experience in the ABE field. Her ongoing doctoral work focuses on community education and qualitative research.*

*Alex came to this project believing that learning is accomplished through investigation and collaboration – something that the Changes Project had in abundance. Perhaps the two most important attributes she brought to this project were her conviction that non-textual representation is a powerful means of communication and understanding and her willingness to keep asking questions, sometimes the same question repeatedly. She relishes the richness this project brought to her work at SABES West. She will never be the same after this experience and counts the friends she made as some of her dearest.*

accommodate and support learners? Is it a form of social change to alter individual perceptions and stereotypes among learners? Is it a form of social change to paint a picture of adult learners as resourceful and resilient individuals, in contrast to more commonly held perceptions of adult learners as unstable or dependent? We don't have answers to these questions – questions that resonate in discussion about participatory action research. We are confident however that the actions learners took part in were of deep significance for them and this research was the beginning of a far-reaching, life altering, and knowledge-transforming process.

## *Conducting the Research*

The multi-layered nature of the Changes Project and our commitment to working within a participatory research framework shaped three ground rules for our work. Our commitment to these three ground rules helped us to live our philosophy.

### One: Moving from Local to Whole and Back Again

On the "local" or program level, the Changes Project was comprised of research teams of learners and a half-time site research facilitator (SRF). As a whole, it was comprised of all five teams, the project coordinator, as well as the methodological consultant and evaluator, and members of the Research Advisory Group. Throughout the project, the work moved between the "local" of the individual teams and the "whole" of the entire project.

Teams focused on different issues. The Center for New Americans (CNA) focused on all three issues. The International Language Institute (ILI) focused first on the changing workplace and then on immigration reform. The Mentor Program (MP) focused exclusively on welfare reform. The UM/Amherst/Amherst Labor Management Workplace Education Program (LMWEP) focused exclusively on the changing workplace. Read/Write/Now (RWN) focused initially, with two teams, on both the changing workplace and on welfare reform, and subsequently, just on welfare reform. These foci were chosen by teams based on their understanding of which issues were relevant for learners at their programs.

As a whole, the five teams identified themes at the first cross-site analytic session (these became know as Analysis Fests) that transcended the three issue areas. These common themes, the combinations of different teams' work on the same issue, and the growing interpersonal connections between all of the researchers, formed the work of the whole. This provided richness, multiple perspectives, ways to deepen inquiry and broaden analysis and synthesis, as well as extending the understanding of the impact of these issues on adult learners.

## Two: Making the Work Accessible

One of our key assumptions is that there are multiple ways of learning, developing knowledge, and articulating knowledge. In order to work together we needed to be inclusive of these multiple ways and ensure that the substance of our work – the 'talk', and 'text' – was accessible to all of us. This was an ongoing challenge because of the diverse literacy and schooling levels, multiple languages, diverse cultures and different "home" programs of the participants.

### "Talk"

Being mindful of the multiplicity of languages present in our work was one of the biggest ongoing challenges of the project. Not only did we speak five languages (English, Spanish, Thai, Korean and Portuguese) among ourselves, we also needed to be mindful of other languages present, including the language of research and higher education, the language of policy and the language of the media. Our efforts focused on continually trying to bring language to the fore in our conversations by actively translating when necessary. So research terms were translated into their common equivalents, such as 'administer the survey' to 'give people the survey to take'. We also, for example, conducted some interviews in native languages and did some analytic work in Spanish with a Spanish-speaking group. Another example is the work that the UM team did to share their vocabulary ('rankism', release time, etc.) with other teams in order for the issue of different treatment to be discussed with less confusion. Teams also created their own ways of both bridging language differences and developing a common language.

The Site Research Facilitator from the Center for New Americans describes some of the strategies they used to be responsive and accommodating to non-native English speakers:

> "When we were preparing for a joint CNA\ILI training on question asking and research techniques, we had to take handouts and information about interviewing and simplify them. We had to leave some information out because, particularly when you are working in another language, you can only take in so much before the brain needs a break. One researcher described it as 'words start spinning in the bowl and lose their meanings'. Another trick we used in our team to refresh our brains after a word-spinning-bowl session was to use pictures as expressions of what we knew."

### "Text"

Working with text, and usually it was text in English, was another ongoing challenge for teams and team members. As the Site Research Facilitator for Read/Write/Now explains it:

> "One ongoing challenge we had at Read/Write/Now was how to engage with all of the information we were gathering, from our interviews and focus groups and

surveys, from our conversations with guest speakers, from our participation in conference workshops, without focusing solely on, or becoming overwhelmed by, text. Several of us were just beginning to learn to read and write, and poring through transcripts, for example, was not only extremely time consuming, but often frustrating and alienating."

RWN and CNA, particularly, developed ways of dealing with data that relied far less on words and much more on visual images. Also, the International Language Institute SRF was talented at theater as a means of communication and assisted the project by using theater both to communicate and as a means of analysis. (For more details on these methods, see the Analysis section.)

### Three: Conducting Research in Ways That Made Sense Locally

The members of the research teams knew best how to talk with their peers and colleagues. Sometimes we used different means of gathering information because doing so meant that we would get better information. Research team members led the way. Here's an example from the Center for New Americans in the words of the Site Research Facilitator:

> "Research teams put their stamp on the process of the work. I'm thinking of that example from the data gathering done by the CNA team. I thought the way to successfully get information from interviewees was to leave the tape on and capture whatever the person said, to capture the natural language of those being interviewed. One team member ignored this practice and developed her own to meet people's needs. She knew people were concerned about speaking correctly [in English] because it was one of her concerns. She began turning off and on the tape as needed to make people feel comfortable. She would often turn off the tape to read over and discuss a question. This gave people time to compose their thoughts. They could then feel free to talk on tape. The tape recorder was pretty intimidating to second language learners. Team members also did a couple of interviews without tapes because people didn't want to talk on tape. The team member who turned the tape on and off ended up recording all of hers on tape, maybe because understanding the uncomfortableness of talking on tape, she developed a clear strategy for dealing with the tape that took people's trepidation into account."

As outlined in this example, we brought to the research a commitment to extensive participation on the part of adult learners at the five sites. We believed their expertise could best inform the ways we conducted the research. The following outlines the process of our research.

## *The Research Process*

The first work was to form research teams and conduct trainings. Team size ranged from 3 to 14. While membership was steady at Center for New Americans, and to a large extent Read/Write/Now and International Language Institute, both UM/Amherst and the Mentor Project experienced some turnover. Both, however, retained a core group for the full duration of the project. (Originally, RWN had two teams. One team of six members disbanded due to continuing conflicts with their work schedules.)

Teams were involved in nearly every aspect of the project, although the degree of their involvement varied. This was a function of several factors, including teams members' limited time, lack of transportation (both private and public), childcare scheduling conflicts, the demands of welfare reform and changing work schedules. Collective decisions were made about where, given limited time, their expertise would best be used. Teams worked as a unit investigating one or several issues at their program and as part of the whole Changes Project. Teams also worked together around common areas of investigation. For example, the RWN and MP teams worked together on welfare reform, the CNA and ILI teams worked together on immigration reform and the CNA, ILI and UM teams worked together on the changing workplace.

Team members at CNA, ILI, MP, and RWN were given stipends to compensate them for their work as researchers for the Changes Project. UM/Amherst team members participated on their own time or by using "release time." (See the UM/Amherst section in the Appendix for details.)

### Phases of the Work

| *PHASES OF THE CHANGES PROJECT'S WORK* |
|---|
| **Team Formation** |
| **Training** |
| **Data Collection** |
| **Phase One:** Interviews |
| **Analysis Fest One** |
| **Phase Two:** Interviews, focus groups, whole project surveys* |
| **Analysis Fest Two** |
| **Phase Three:** Interviews, focus groups, welfare-focused survey, immigrant-focused survey and workplace change-focused survey |
| **Analysis Fest Three** |
| **Project Wrap-up and Report Writing** |

*see survey section for detais on whole project survey

The project began with team formation, a key aspect of PAR. This period included not only team member recruitment and training, but the beginning of the development of team and project identity, an initial opportunity to learn about each others' skills, experiences, and knowledge and to develop trust.

The project was designed to have three phases of data collection, each containing a round of interviews, one focus group and the administration of one survey. In reality, the timing of different types of data gathering shifted due to the development of the project and to the mismatch of sites' schedules (including when programs' classes were in session, when team members were available to meet, etc.) This three-phased structure is in keeping with the fact that PAR often tends to be cyclic, that is, having similar steps occur within similar sequences throughout the life of a given research project. The cyclic nature of PAR helps it to be responsive to emerging needs of the situation being studied and of the participants involved in the inquiry. This approach also adds to the rigor of the research in that interpretations that are developed in early cycles can be tested and refined or changed in later cycles (Dick, 1997).

The research began with a period of question generating. After that, data gathering in the first phase began with interviews, which was an immediate departure from the process initially envisioned. This shift was a result of learners' desire to begin with interviews. They felt that starting the research by talking with their peers was more comfortable and do-able for them. Timing, in the first phase of data gathering, also precluded doing a focus group – we simply ran out of time because the interviews and the survey development took much longer than anticipated.

Recognizing that it would be important to do ongoing analysis, rather than waiting to the end, we capped the first phase of data collection with the first all day Analysis Fest. This whole project meeting provided the opportunity to collectively analyze interview data gathered across sites and across issues. See Analysis for more on this subject.

The second phase of data collection included interviews, four focus groups, and six SPACE groups at UM/Amherst. (For more information about this see the Making SPACE to Talk section that follows.) We also administered the whole project survey. (More on this in the Surveys section.) Again, we capped the data gathering with the second all day Analysis Fest.

The third phase of data collection included interviews, eight focus groups and three SPACE groups and the administration of three surveys. We ended this phase with a third Analysis Fest, this one consisting of two half-day and one full day sessions.

## Generating Questions

The project's commitment to move from local to whole and back again was reflected in the question generating. We built the questions from the initial question of the research: What is the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work on the learning and achievement of adult learners? Building from this very broad beginning, initial interview and survey questions were generated by the site research teams. These then came to the group of site researcher facilitators, the project coordinator, and the methodological consultant for further development. They were then returned to the teams – along with questions generated by the other teams – for further revisions. This iterative process, while very time-consuming, strengthened the questions in three ways:

1. Questions originated with learners who have the insight and understanding about the effect of these issues on their pursuit of their educational goals.
2. The iterative, back-and-forth, process of generating questions resulted in much richer discussion
3. Cross-pollination of questions across sites raised questions that sometimes had not been identified by individual teams, but which were considered important and useful to the team.

## Data Gathering

Data gathering included interviewing, focus groups, surveys, observations, writing activities and team-initiated action projects. Each team conducted interviews (and, where possible, follow-up interviews) and focus groups. Surveys were administered at each site. In addition, teams developed unique means to gather data to suit their local environment. (See sections on Writing Activities, Group Interviews, and Trees. See also the Mentor Program section in the Appendix for more details on metaphor analysis.)

### Interviews

The process of interviewing involved several simultaneous activities: generating questions and developing the interview guides, learning about interviewing and developing interview procedures.

Interviews were conducted at all five sites. Over the course of the project, 97 interviews were conducted (see chart for the breakdown across sites). Of these, two thirds were followed-up with a second interview to expand on the information given during the first interview and to clarify what was said and what was understood. Those individuals with whom we did not have a second interview were generally not available.

| *BREAKDOWN OF SITE BY INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS* | |
|---|---|
| **Site** | **Total Number of Interviews** |
| CNA | 15 |
| ILI | 19 |
| MP | 17 |
| RWN | 34 |
| UM/LMWEP | 12 |

*Of the 238 interview and focus group participants, 19 participated in both an interview and a focus group.*

The first phase interview guides were developed at each site. The site research facilitators met to compare interview questions developed at the sites and to provide feedback about the interview guides. During the first phase, the interview guides had many similar questions. The process of developing these questions included two iterations of teams to SRFs and SRFs to teams. The interviews covered up to five areas (remember that each team did not focus on all three issue areas):

1. Background and demographic questions about the interviewee
2. Questions about school attendance, why the learner is attending and what their motivation is for attending;
3. Effects of welfare reform on learning and achievement of learner's educational goals.
4. Effects of immigration policy changes on learning and achievement of learner's educational goals.
5. Effects of the changing workplace on learning and achievement of learner's educational goals.

Teams modified the interview guides for the second phase of data gathering based on the developing understanding of the impact of the three issues on learners and on their achievement of their education goals.

The interviews conducted in the third phase either used the same interview guide as the second, or modified it slightly. Modifications were in response to what had been learned to date, and questions for which we needed more information and understanding.

The learner members of the research teams did the bulk of the interviewing. Before any interviewing began, sites conducted trainings in interview procedures, including how to ask questions, how to productively, effectively and politely delve deeper into a topic area, how to juggle asking questions and taking notes, how to be a good listener, how to operate a tape

recorder. Learners practiced interviewing. In some cases these were in fishbowl situations where team members observed two individuals conducting an interview (one as the interviewer and one as the interviewee) and then offered observations and feedback.

Teams reviewed tapes and transcripts of the interviews. From these reviews, questions that needed follow up in the second interview were identified. After the first round of data gathering, the project evaluator suggested that we focus more attention on question elaboration. As a result, teams practiced ways of probing and ways of asking for clarification.

Another aspect of preparing for interviews was the process of identifying interview candidates. Teams discussed different sampling techniques and, then, tapping their often-extensive knowledge of their fellow learners, implemented different sampling strategies, including typical and extreme case sampling. This was balanced by the realities of who was available to be interviewed.

**Focus Groups**

One hundred thirty seven individuals participated in focus groups. CNA, ILI, MP, and RWN each held three focus groups, UM/Amherst held nine SPACE groups.

*BREAKDOWN OF SITE BY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS*

| Site | Total Number of Focus Group Participants |
|---|---|
| CNA | 20 |
| ILI | 28 |
| MP | 18* |
| RWN | 12 |
| UM/LMWEP | 63 (known as SPACE groups) |

**The MP also conducted writing groups for 35 individuals.*
*Of the 238 interview and focus group participants, 19 participated in both an interview and a focus group.*

Focus groups were developed to explore in-depth, with a group of learners, several key questions around which we wanted more information. These questions were identified in the ongoing analysis process. Each focus group was designed to fit the local environment of the program at which it was to be conducted. At ILI, for example, researchers wanted to create a comfortable and safe place in which their peers, the focus group participants, could talk about

Thinking about interviewing with learners? Here are some practical considerations our researchers identified as important to know:

- learn how to use a tape recorder and where to place it so that the recording will be of a good quality;
- making eye contact, but also feeling comfortable with referencing the interview guide for each question;
- when to abandon the interview guide and go with what's before you, when to stick to it;
- how to open the interviews, and how to bring them to a close;
- how to make the interviewee comfortable and how to be comfortable as an interviewer;
- recognize the importance of pausing to wait for someone to collect their thoughts, or deepen their response;
- understand that cultural differences come into play, as do language and literacy issues;
- interpret body language;
- how to be gently elicit more without being intrusive.

their immigration experiences. The researchers worked with a teacher to develop a class in which learners read an article about a neighborhood in New York faced with immigration issues. The teacher then asked the learners to write their own immigration story before the team of researchers came to visit the class. This preparation created an atmosphere in which ILI learners felt freer to talk about the circumstances of their immigration.

The Mentor Project developed a focus group activity to get more data on the theme of support and based it on their metaphor analysis work. Here is a description of their activity, in the words of the MP SRF:

> "Because we knew from our first round of data analysis that learners talked about support as something they both give and receive, focus group facilitators created a visual metaphor for their group. Using a poster paper "wall," participants were told that the wall represented the idea of support in an individual's life. The "blocks" represented the supports people receive, while the "mortar" (the spaces around the blocks), represented the supports they give to others. The bottom tier of blocks and mortar in the templates represented an individualís foundation of supports necessary to sustain life. The next tier up represented supports an individual needs in order to go to school and to stay in school. The top tier represented supports that improve the quality of a person's life, though these particular supports may not be necessary to sustain life.
>
> Both the second and third focus groups provided us with a great deal of information about how participants organize their lives around the networks of support to which they are intricately, and often inextricably, connected. We were able to collect data in these focus groups that gave us a very complex picture of people's lives within these networks of support. The focus groups were also excellent laboratories for developing recommendations based on the findings we later developed. Many of the participants articulated a number of thoughtful recommendations for educational programs and suggestions to policy makers for improvements in the way they serve learners who are welfare recipients."

**Focus Groups at UM/Amherst – Making SPACE to Talk at UM/Amherst**

Data gathering at UM/Amherst evolved differently from the other sites. This was a result of the dynamics of talking about workplace changes and issues with workers at their workplace. In the first phase, several team members were unsuccessful in setting up interviews with co-workers for the project. The feedback from these potential interviewees was that they were uncertain and nervous about how the information would be used. Talking one-on-one about issues related to the workplace at the workplace caused discomfort for some workers.

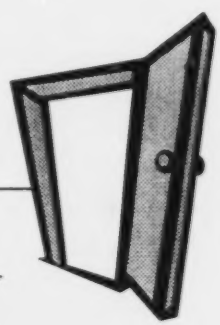
However, talking with a group of other workers seemed to alleviate these anxieties. As a consequence of these concerns about safety, the inherent tensions around these issues and their links to issues of rankism and classism at the university, the UM/Amherst team began to run group interviews. These groups were UM/Amherst's main data-gathering tools. This was an agreed-upon hybrid of focus groups and interviews, which maximized data gathering, comfort, and safety. It also served to identify individuals with whom follow-up interviews could be conducted to dig deeper into issues raised in the group interviews. These group interviews were advertised by flyers and posters bearing the heading, "Let's make SPACE to talk," using an acronym for discussion groups about the changing workplace that was coined by a team member to mean Safe Place Allowing Communication and Exchange.

**Surveys**

Surveys were the most problematic form of data gathering in this project. The challenges of multiple literacy levels, multiple languages and respondents – particularly newcomers and UM/Amherst workers – and concerns about safety made the development and administration of a traditional survey instrument inappropriate. This was evident to us after the first survey was administered.

Question development was done by teams, with refinement and formatting done by SRFS. Consultants, the research advisory group and the project coordinator assisted with question refinement and formatting. Surveys were pilot-tested by team members and/or a small group of learners. These groups were debriefed about the appropriateness of the literacy levels and the clarity and understandability of the questions. Their suggestions strengthened the survey.

The first survey was created for use across the five sites. Our hope was that a survey administered at all five sites would provide data across the different populations and different issues. We hoped to see differences and similarities that transcended the diversity of the sites.



---

## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

***Leslie Fraser** has led writing and communications workshops for workplaces, continuing education programs, and nonprofit groups since 1982. A writer, communications consultant, and former magazine editor, she has provided writing, editing, publishing, and design services to dozens of organizations. Leslie has taught courses in advanced writing, computers and writing, and the changing workplace at UM/Amherst since 1997. She coordinates the career ladders program and is an instructor in the university's Labor/Management Workplace Education Program. She is committed to labor/management partnerships that foster workplace democracy and cultivate a culture of learning for all workers.*

*Leslie was the site research facilitator for the UMLMWEP team.*

For a number of reasons we had little confidence in the results of the first survey. Despite our efforts to use simple and accessible language responses indicated confusion on the part of respondents. Question types other than multiple choice proved to be unsuccessful. Research team members eliminated Likert scales in the pilot testing phase as too confusing, particularly for non-native speakers and individuals with low-literacy skills. Limited ability or desire on the part of the respondents, particularly from these groups, to answer in writing meant we got very little data from short answer questions. Facilitation of the survey administration proved to be key to getting good results. For the populations we wanted to hear from, support in responding to the survey – including clarifying instructions and questions and sometimes physically writing down a response to free the respondent from the task – was critical. This facilitation was not available for the first survey. In addition, because we needed to elicit information across the three issue areas, the survey we designed was very long. This was problematic in two ways: respondents did not have enough time to respond (and for those asked to do it on their own time there was little incentive) and the length was intimidating, even with facilitation, for non-native speakers and individuals with low-literacy skills.

What we learned from the first survey's creation, administration and results helped us to shape future surveys and define their focus. Rather than focusing the surveys primarily on additional data gathering, we used them to attempt to confirm or question the preliminary results from the interviews and focus groups.

We developed three issue-focused surveys:

- a welfare focused survey administered at RWN (50 respondents) and with MP groups (33 respondents);
- an immigration and work focused survey administered at ILI (21 respondents) and CNA (56 respondents); and,
- a workplace focused survey administered at UM/Amherst (206 respondents)

These surveys were tailored to fit the "locales" at which they were administered. Their adaptations to fit language and literacy levels and site research foci gave us greater confidence in the results. (Surveys were anonymous. Survey respondents may also have participated through interviews or focus groups.)

## Observations

Observation was an ongoing part of the project and took several forms. Site Research Facilitators kept field notes and included them in the site analysis. Team members made observations as part of their data gathering activities, including interviews, focus groups, writing activities, action projects and surveys. Interactions between team members at each of the Analysis Fests were also noted and included in analysis.

## Analysis

Because of its participatory action research structure, analysis occurred at a number of places within the Changes Project. Each site conducted analysis of the data they gathered. The SRF group also conducted analysis, and the whole project conducted analysis together at three Analysis Fests. In addition, analysis was an integral aspect of "action," as will be discussed below.

Initial data analysis took place at the project sites. Distinctive methods of data analysis were used. Some teams relied on the written transcripts of focus groups and interviews, but for others this presented literacy and language challenges. Many teams instead relied on the audiotapes of focus groups and interviews as a means of coding and analyzing the data; others worked from transcripts. The process included: summarizing the data; categorizing the data based on what interviewees said; applying researcher-generated categories; and writing analytic memos.

### Developing Categories

Categorizing of data was done by teams at the five sites both across each issue, and across all three issues and all five teams. Themes in the data either originated with the researchers or emerged from the data. The researcher themes that were held in common across the project were: Impact, Obstacles/Barriers, Access and Springboards. These themes came from the original research question. The emergent themes across the five sites were Support, Voice, Respect, and Interdependence/Dependence/Independence. Because the UM team was also interested in looking at issues of classism and rankism in the workplace, they added these as researcher originated themes.

### Analysis Fests

Teams came together as a whole group to conduct analysis at three separate times – Analysis Fests One, Two and Three – to conduct analysis across the issues and across the sites. Analysis at the site level was preparation for this whole group analysis. We called these whole group meetings Analysis Fests both as a way to make them less daunting, and as a small piece of humor. Humor and lightness was a good antidote for being overwhelmed not only by the serious impact of the issues we saw, but also by the hard work of doing research. We found the Analysis Fests to be exciting gatherings. We compared our understanding of the issues and shared analyses of what we were hearing and what people were saying. We looked for commonality across the sites and issues, and we looked for differences.

Analysis Fest One focused on getting to know each other as people and on finding patterns and themes that existed across the data of the five sites. The two days began with introduction and icebreakers to help team members begin to work together across teams and across the three issues. The core analytical activity for the fest was working with key themes and quotes

that each site identified and prepared before arriving at the meeting. Participants broke up into three small groups; each small group included team members from different sites. The small groups worked to understand each site's themes through listening to team members from that site and through reading quotes selected to support and illuminate the theme. Each small group looked for relationships between site themes and grouped these themes looking for an overall pattern in the data. The concept of support appeared on each group's list and become a central theme around which inquiry was conducted for the rest of the project.

The focus of Analysis Fest Two was on telling and listening to stories from the sites and on developing a deeper understanding of the issues and how they impact learners' lives. Each of the two days featured a different way of dramatically presenting the realities of peoples' lives in face of welfare reform, immigration reform and the demands of the changing workplace. The first day featured "composite stories" from each team. Some teams choose to tell the story of one actual person, while others created composite fictional characters experiencing the many effects of the issues. These composite stories really educated others about the experiences of welfare recipients, newcomers, and workers. After each story was told, all participants engaged in the analytical activity of sorting ideas they heard into four categories: 1) Support / The Net, 2) Obstacles / Barriers, 3) Springboards, and 4) Access.

Day Two began with dramatic presentations including two theater presentations, an extended metaphor poem, and a story of a dramatic event. (See the appendix for the scripts of the theater pieces. See the MP section, also in the Appendix, for more information on the extended metaphor poem: "Watermelon Seed.") After each presentation, participants asked many questions about what they saw and heard. This allowed the presenting team to show their knowledge of the topic and listeners to learn about the issue. These presentations were powerful tools that provided researchers with evidence of connections between the impacts these three issues have on learners. They also fueled ideas for action. The day ended with three cross-site groups, each using the metaphor of a tree as a tool to synthesize learning and understanding. One tree was developed for each of the three issue areas. (See the Tree section for more information.)

Analysis Fest Three focused on deciding what were the most important findings to share with others and developing ways to communicate these findings. This Analysis Fest was held on three days over the course of two weeks. The first half-day was devoted to developing "news-casts" about the issue area findings. The first step in this process was to meet in issue groups (two to three groups worked on each issue) to make final decisions about the major points, to ensure points were worded accurately, and to prioritize the most important. The second step was to decide how to talk about these findings with an audience. We used the dramatic tool of simulating a TV newscast or talk show while outside advisors watched and gave us feedback.

The second half of the Analysis Fest focused on further developing and checking the validity of work done by the SRFs on the data pertaining to support and voice. The work began in small groups divided by issue (one welfare reform group, one immigration reform group, and one changing workplace group) to determine the most important findings. These were reported to the whole group. They were then categorized and presented by Site Research Facilitators again to the whole group for feedback.

**Site Research Facilitators Group Analytic Activities**

The analytic work of the SRFs spanned two dimensions. The first was to participate as a full team member in the analytic work done by teams. The second dimension was to "mind the whole" while the teams dug into the issues on the local level. This included a series of analytic discussions and memos about the emerging definitions of support, voice, independence and interdependence, their complexity across the learner populations and the three issues. It also included reflection memos about how the analysis process was being conducted and what was being seen and learned. These were done with the significant assistance of the project coordinator and with help from the methodological consultant, the project evaluator and the research advisory group members.

**Team Analytic Activities**

Teams engaged in a variety of analytic activities in addition to straight text coding (done either in writing or through listening to tapes). Straight text coding was highly problematic for three research teams due to team members' literacy and English language skills (ILI, CNA, and RWN). Text analyses was not a problem for MP or UM team members, although UM team members struggled to find enough time to pour over the lengthy interview transcripts. Other analytic methods used are outlined below.

**Trees and Other Locally Developed Analytic Activities**

Trees were one of the non-text-based methods used by teams and the whole project for analysis, interpretation, and synthesis. The trees provided a structure for these activities. Generally speaking, the ground the tree was growing in, the tree's roots, trunk, branches, leaves and fruits were identified with different aspects of the data to critically examine their connections to one another.

<u>The UM/Amherst Tree</u>

At UM/Amherst the tree was most useful in describing and understanding the university as an integrated system. A team member drew a tree on a sheet of newsprint, and the team started looking at the tree from the ground up. One member thought that the soil that holds the tree was the "ground for cooperation." Some also saw the environment the tree grows in as a bureaucracy that saps energy, morale, and the impetus for democratic change. Wages and

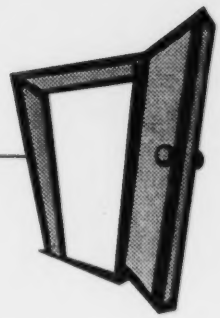
benefits were mentioned as being fertilizer for the workers and for future growth of the university. The roots of the tree were described as the foundation of the university, and also as the maintainers and frontline workers who provide the services and infrastructure of the university. The taproot of the tree was described as the university's mission and policies, and mission statements were also described as one of the branches of the tree. The tree trunk was described as the main support structures of the university: the physical buildings and grounds, the finances that support the university, and the research and faculty knowledge that deliver its education mission. Workplace change was described as the growth of the tree, while disease and predators were said to make the workplace weak.

Many metaphors were used to describe the branches: the departments that reach throughout the campus and beyond to government and society; the diversity of learners and workers; the non-classroom activities and events of staff and learners; education of learners and workers; university mission statements; the work environment; university services. Clusters of leaves were seen as the learners. Fruit of the tree was seen as what learners and workers learn. Influence and voice is possible through groups of workers and coalitions on campus, which was another metaphor for clusters of leaves. Someone mentioned that the leaves are always feeding the roots. A broken tree limb was seen as the workers needing support. And the tree repair and need for ongoing tree maintenance was described as the need for support structures for workers' assistance, education, and training.

Sun and nutrients were seen as respect, supportive supervisors, safety, openness to change, trust, and inclusion in decisions that affect workers and new policies. The cold front, deep freeze, or ill wind that slows down the democratic system and growth were seen as bureaucratic management, forced changes, disrespect, and negative, non-supportive influences in the university.

The ILI Tree

At first, when the ILI team talked about creating a tree to describe what newcomers go through in this country, researchers were not very clear about how someone's life could be represented by a tree. As each team member started drawing their own version of a tree, they began to understand that it would be a very good tool to educate people about the steps newcomers need to follow when they first arrive in the U.S. The first tree created by the team provoked some conflict among team members. The idea had been to compare and contrast the experiences of legal immigrants and those of undocumented immigrants. It became apparent to everyone that those who are here as undocumented immigrants face many more issues than those who are here legally. This exercise fostered enriching discussion and helped to clarify what ILI's tree would look like. There was agreement that the tree should represent the life of a successful newcomer who is able to accomplish his/her goals by harvesting what has been planted.



## MEET A RESEARCHER

***Eugenie Harvey**, a researcher on the UM/LMWEP team.*

*Perceptual student. Unpopular vocation. Poet (did I say that?)*
*Bookkeeper. Spfly.*
*Artiste provocateur. Translator at large.*
*Translator who isn't large. Translator who is indeed – quite little!*
*Perceptual watcher of old Lennon/Ono movie.*
*Perceptual giver. Feminist.*
*Shows leg only to trusted friend.*
*Poet (I said that, didn't I). Sober. Quick.*
*Slobber. (You said it not me.)*

*Labor studies student. Education student.*
*I once studied technical writing.*
*Friend of Harry Potter. Book lover.*
*Union stewart. Martha Stewart who is she?*
*Woman in need of a makeover? Woman who*
*will get numerous makeovers as that is the education*
*process. Meanwhile, I am getting more and more*
*educated and mildly Horton.*
*Think about it.*

*I have! I have!*

*By all appearances – not interested in money!*

*Sex. Female. Testosterone level: unknown.*
*Don't look it up! Owner of low balance credit card.*
*Anti-Republican. Extremely radical in fact.*
*Direly radical by desiregn.*

*E-mail bored. Web bored. Design board. All I want is my digital*
*camera and no phone. Oh ditch the TV, what the heck!*

*Going home. Relatively unafraid.*
*Media Doppler.*
*Friend of Dogs, God and, well, my friends.*
*duh.*

The Growth of the CNA Tree

The Center for New American's team found working with so many words and texts in a second language can be tiring. Because of this the team also turned to visuals and picture construction to show findings. Pictures and color gave different ways of expressing ideas to team members. A powerful picture that emerged from the research was the Immigration Tree, which was first developed at the second Analysis Fest by a cross-site group. This tree was drawn in vibrant colors. The trunk showed the states that an immigrant moves through as she settles into her country. The branches represent the good things that will come to the immigrant, particularly when she achieves her full rights as a citizen. The sides of the trees showed positive and negative forces as the immigrant moves through her journey. This depiction of the immigration process resonated with the Center for New Americans team. One reason for this is that many people at CNA talk about the step-by-step process that immigrants have to go through to achieve their hopes and dreams. The tree was a vivid visualization of that concept.

The tree also proved an effective visual aid for presentations to members of CNA's staff and to legislators. The tree helped remind presenters what to say next, and gave listeners a concrete symbol of what immigrants go through to acculturate to the United States. Because the tree was so well received by others, it helped to build the confidence of the CNA team.

Building from the immigration tree, the CNA team also developed a CNA-specific tree. The team located the stories of people interviewed at the appropriate spots on the tree. From this they could see how few people had been able to move up into the branches of the tree. Having the visual impact of where people's stories were congregated gave the team further insight into the data and helped to develop their findings and recommendations.

The Many Trees of RWN

Trees were used so often and in so many different ways at Read/Write/Now that it became almost a mascot for the team, a symbol that took on a life of its own. The first tree the team created grew to about twelve feet tall and was a melange of colored construction paper, writing, trunks and leaves and fruit and soil and roots and wind and rain. The team started meeting in the basement of the building, and that is where the first tree took root and began to grow: a bright, organic, colorful creation gaining life in the dark. The team used it to map their understanding of the issues they were exploring, as a catalyst for discussion and dialogue, and as a springboard for further inquiry. They were also able to take it with them to several workshops and presentations and it was a concrete symbol of their learning, their process of coming to know, and of them as a team.

On their first tree, the team mapped their understanding of welfare reform and how it was affecting the people they were talking to at RWN. The first tree's key is as follows: Soil is what feeds the tree; Roots are the root causes of welfare reform; the Trunk represents the effects of welfare reform on people's lives; the Leaves are people's goals, hopes and dreams; Branches are what people need in order to meet their goals; and Fruit is what would grow if people were able to reach their goals.

They also included environmental factors (wind, rain, a lumberjack, the sun, creatures who live in the soil) to symbolize various causes or effects that didn't seem to belong to the tree itself. These helped to represent the dynamic and changing nature of people's lives, of policies, and their interactions. As a team member said: "It is wonderful how we come up with things in the spur of the moment and we always go with it and it's always good – like when we made the first tree, and talked about what the leaves and fruit and different pieces meant, and added the rain because it was like people's tear drops". The tree helped the team to map – as well as enhance their understanding of – what they were seeing and hearing. It helped them talk about the intersections between various pieces, to explore more deeply, contextualize, analyze, to form a more comprehensive picture, and to see clearly the areas where they wanted to know more.

As the project progressed, the RWN team used trees again and again in various contexts and for various purposes. They used a tree map as a guide for one of their focus group discussions in which they were concentrating specifically on exploring the theme of support. They called that tree the Support Tree. They used a tree before their third phase of data gathering to map what they felt they already knew and what they wanted to know more about. The team shared this tree with one of the other Changes Project teams focusing their research on welfare reform. Sharing the tree gave them feedback and helped them prepare their third phase of questioning. The team was able to refer to it and add to it as the third phase progressed.

**Metaphor Analysis**

Headed up by the Mentor Program (described in detail in the MP section in the Appendix), the work of metaphor analysis examines and "unpacks" metaphors used by learners to describe the effects of welfare reform. The MP team came to realize that the metaphors people use in everyday language are rich sources of information about their knowledge, perceptions, relationships to and within the world, as well as their cognition. In addition, because metaphors are fundamental to the way the human conceptual system is structured, a person's ability to create and use a complex metaphor is independent of their literacy level or the language that they speak, making metaphor analysis particularly appropriate for this project.

I feel like the seed in
a watermelon,
Simply being a seed inside
of the watermelon.
The system makes me feel
so useless,
though I know I can
accomplish so much.

Oh! Oh! Finally
somebody decided to
open the watermelon
and let me out.

But what is going to happen
to the rest of the seeds
left behind and forgotten
inside of the watermelon?

What is going to happen
to those seeds
that were together with me?

What is going to happen
to those that
were not given like-wise
the opportunity to germinate?

*Poem by Betty Falcón*

Here is an example developed by Betty Falcon, a MP team member. Her metaphor was: "As a welfare recipient, I am the seed in a watermelon." Although the relationship between the two is not obvious at first, she uses the seed to express her feelings of isolation as a welfare recipient; her separation from others in similar circumstances; her sense of being trapped; and her inability to break out of the system in order to "germinate," to become productive and self-sufficient. In essence, she is imposing one conceptual domain upon another in her metaphor in order to express a meaning that is unique to her situation and to a particular time and place in history, thus creating a new similarity between the two concepts that previously had no obvious similarity. After analyzing her "watermelon seed" metaphor, this participant extended her metaphor even further by writing a poem.

## Blurring the Boundaries Between Data Gathering, Action and Analysis

Because our research was rooted in participatory action research traditions, the critical junctures between data gathering, analysis and action were key sources of data, key catalysts, and locations for powerful analysis and key opportunities for taking action. Research in this tradition – in which taking action is a central element – is significantly shaped by purpose. Researchers in this tradition are engaged not only in investigation but also in using their investigation to create change. This was true for the Changes Project researchers as well. Their involvement was fueled by the energy that came from addressing their own issues and those of their peers. What follows are examples of these critical junctures, the different actions teams took, and the different levels (programmatic, community, political, educational) where the action took place.

### Writing Activities – Action Taken by the Mentor Program Team

In addition to interviews, surveys, and focus groups, the Mentor Program engaged participants in a number of writing activities. The writing classrooms and workshops provided a wealth of data for this project. They also fit well with the goals of the Changes Project as a whole. From its inception, the Changes Project has been strongly committed to ensuring that research participants benefit in a variety of ways from the project. Writing groups for research participants provided:

- Data for the project.
- Opportunities to learn to conduct research.

- Opportunities to build and strengthen connections with others whose lives are similarly affected by the issues being investigated.
- Opportunities to develop supportive relationships with the Mentor Program mentors.
- Opportunities to identify, learn about, reflect upon and take action on issues of critical importance to their lives.
- Opportunities to develop literacy, critical thinking and other academic skills.

A strong example of the multiplicity of benefits of these writing activities took place early on in the project. In one of the Mentor Program's writing workshops for teen mothers in a GED program, participants (which included the teens and community college mentors) decided they wanted to write about how welfare reform affected their lives. After generating a collection of essays and poems, the writers discussed a variety of actions they could take on the issues they wrote about. After much discussion, the group decided to draft a "Mother's Day Letter" that included excerpts from their essays and a poem written by the whole group. This letter, entitled "What's Going to Happen to Us" (see the Appendix), was sent to legislators, adult basic education programs, local newspapers and radio stations. The directors of the GED program were so impressed with the letter that they attached it to their annual Mother's Day fundraising appeal.

In response to the letter, a local newspaper sent out a reporter to interview some of the young writers, and published a story about the impact of welfare reform on teen parents. As this story suggests, the writing and data gathering activities had a variety of positive, powerful outcomes. The writers saw how their life experiences could be used as the subject matter of essays and poems. They learned that by working together and developing a collective voice, they could inform the public about their experiences as welfare recipients and learners. Not only did they enhance their writing skills, they also got a real sense of how the written word can make people listen and, possibly, change their minds. Over the ten weeks of the writing workshop, participants identified and wrote about issues that were affecting them critically. They took action through compiling a letter, identifying an audience, sending it out, and dealing with the local media. The writers learned to work together, to listen carefully to one another, to think about their own lives within a larger context, and to reconsider the role of education in their futures. Strong and supportive relationships developed between the mentors from the community college and the teens.

**A Springboard for Learner Investigation – Action Taken by the Center for New Americans Team**

What follows, in the words of the Center for New Americans SRF, is the team's purpose for conducting research and taking action and the different kinds of action they took.

"An important reason for all of us to work on this project was to be able to help people. Taking action to use our findings was important and exciting work for us. We took action by sharing our findings with CNA. We made presentations to the staff and in November [1999] will be making a presentation on what we recommend for CNA to do in response to our findings. We also went into classes to present the immigration tree (developed at the second Analysis Fest). We participated in Immigrants Day at the State House where we presented the immigration tree and lobbied for budget issues and legislation relating to immigrants. We shared information with other teachers at the Network conferences [the Massachusetts Adult Educators conferences in 1998 and 1999] and with social work activists at the Bertha Capen Reynolds Conference at Smith College."

A key outcome of work at the Center for New Americans was the commitment by a group of learners to investigate two learner-identified needs. After conducting a focus group with the Communication Group (a CNA class for advanced ESOL learners), class members developed a list of needs. Small groups then picked two of the needs to investigate in depth: getting a driver's license and accessing benefits. After completing research, groups developed presentations and went to the CNA's Advanced Intermediate Class to deliver them.

**Speaking Out and Telling the Story – Action Taken by RWN Team**

Like CNA, the RWN team was also motivated to take action. Similar but not identical, each team's actions were rooted in its own unique context. The RWN SRF offers the following summary about the RWN team's purpose and actions.

"The issues we researched, and the difficulties faced by our participants – often because of the new policies being enacted – made us feel that we wanted to act on what we were hearing, do something that might ultimately help to change peoples' situations for the better. During the course of the two years, we became involved in several types of action to this end. We conducted a letter writing campaign, and with the assistance of our classmates, sent off almost two hundred letters to our local, state, and national representatives. The letters expressed our beliefs, talked about how specific policies were affecting us, and named the legislative measures we wanted our representatives to support. In addition, we participated in several different rallies and speak outs organized by local groups involved in economic justice issues – in New York City, in Boston, and locally. Along with the wider Changes Project group, we presented at a number of different conferences and workshops, and we did several presentations at our own program.

The more we talked and told, the more convinced we became in the power of stories to get the word out, to educate, to counteract harmful myths and stereotypes, to create change. This growing conviction has led us to our current project in which we are compiling the stories of those with whom we have spoken, along with poetry we – and our participants – have written, and pictures, into a book. We will publish it in house, and then distribute it to other adult education programs across the state, to groups doing action around welfare reform legislation, and to our local, state, and national representatives. We hope that our book, Out on a Limb, will help open a window for people to see into our lives and the lives of our colleagues and classmates, and show not only our struggles, but our strengths."

**Personal Assistance – Action Taken by the International Language Institute Team**

As with CNA and RWN, The International Language Institute team took action, and did so in a local and intimate way. The confusion and distress of those they talked with led them to respond by providing information and personal assistance to their classmates. Other action at ILI exhibited some of the same characteristics as action at other sites: bringing data and requests for support and changes to legislators through Immigrants' Day in Boston and participating in conference presentations to get the word out.

**Working Toward Institutional Change – Action Taken by the LMWEP Team at UM/Amherst**

Action taken by the UM/Amherst team took many forms, including talking about the Changes Project and our research in a worker radio show, *Up Front!*. The show was broadcast on the university's radio station, WMUA, in September 1998. Two very important pieces of action were Making Work Work and Career Ladders.

Making Work Work is a group of some of the members of the UM/Amherst workplace team who have been meeting as a support and problem-solving group to develop strategies for worksites and workers. Team members have met with members of the Organizational Development and Workplace Quality Improvement programs from the university's Training and Development Unit. Group members are pursuing possible information programs to take to other workers and the involvement of classified staff in the development of Training and Development's program, "Tools for an Effective Workplace."

Information gathered by the Classism and Changing Workplace team is being used to develop a career ladder system on campus. A task force of management and AFSCME union representatives, with LMWEP, is discussing career ladder proposals in four areas: frontline

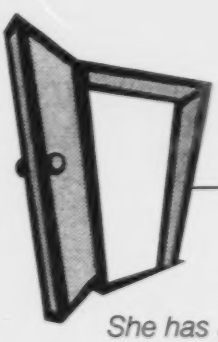
workers and technological change; rewards for employees taking courses; supports for worker-learners and their supervisors; and a one-stop counseling system for frontline workers.

### Products Emerging from Analysis and Action

Analytic work also developed products connected to both analysis and action. These include two booklets: Voices Making Change and Out on a Limb, theater scenarios developed about the three issues (see Appendix), and a video on group analytic process. Voices Making Change, put together from data gathered in the first phase, was organized by the MP team and published and distributed to legislators, other programs and at conferences. The RWN team developed Out on a Limb.

The stop action theater scenarios engaged team members in developing short, three-five minute scenarios around the three central issues. These scenarios are interrupted at a moment of conflict. Audience members then have the opportunity to question characters, make suggestions or predict outcomes. Performers remain in character for the responses. This form of theater is based on Augusto Boal's "Theater of the Oppressed" methods. It is a form of participatory theater developed in the 1970s, and rooted in the Latin American popular education movements of the last several decades. Boal's theater techniques offer learners, teachers, parents and administrators innovative tools to analyze, address, and educate others about issues they face in their workplaces and communities.

Team members from CNA, ILI, RWN, and UM created theater scenarios dealing with welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing workplace (see Appendix). The welfare reform scenario was called "Please Don't Take My Children Away". It was the story of a single mother just beginning to learn to read and write who was unable to complete her education or get a job by the time she reached her two-year time limit. The story followed her through several scenes in which she visited her DTA worker and the Housing Authority, eventually returning home to talk to her friend about her worries and fears about continuing



## *MEET A RESEARCHER*

*Renata Watson was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil where she lived for 22 years. She has a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from PUC (Pontificia Universidade Catolica). She moved to Radford, Virginia in 1992 and received a Master's in Teaching English as a Second Language in May of 1993. Since then, she has been teaching ESL to adult students in a number of different settings.*

*Renata has become very interested in making online learning accessible to her students. She is now pursuing a Master's Degree in Teaching with Internet Technologies at Marlboro College. She plans to help teachers to incorporate technology into the classroom to supplement their teaching.*

to be able to support her family and keep custody of her children. At that moment a DSS worker knocks on the door and informs her that unless she can prove she has a means of supporting her children, they will have to be put into foster care. The action is stopped when the main character says, "Please don't take my children away." At that point the audience is invited to make comments and/or to ask questions of the actors, who remain in character. We found this to be a powerful means of going more deeply into our research, and of being able to tell our stories to others.

While data gathering, analysis and action are each distinct activities, the boundaries between them can become blurred, as the above-mentioned products illustrate. This blurring can highlight a rich area for discovery and understanding. Harking back to Peter Park's (1998) three kinds of knowledge, and to our continuing reflection on action, we recognize that when a participant has an insight during an interview that leads them to make a personal change, that is action. And, when a theater piece designed to educate others about the effects of welfare reform helps the actors to deepen their understanding of the issues and clarify connections among themes in the data, that is analysis. Each of these activities (data gathering, analysis, and action) strengthens the other and offers opportunities for new insight and reflection on the process, the findings, and the issues.

## *Soundness of the Study*

The Changes Project was a two-year participatory action research project that grew to three years of data collection and analysis. Individual learners affected by the three issues under investigation formed the core group of researchers and analysts. The SRFs and the project coordinator worked with research teams throughout the process providing training, assistance, and support for team building and development. Data was gathered from

### Creating a One-Stop Action Theater Scenario

The process of creating a one-stop action theater scenario should not take more than thirty minutes. Begin with some theater warm-up exercises. These get everyone to their feet and working together. Divide the group into smaller groups of about 5 people. Each small group has a facilitator who guides the group in developing a scene of a story. The process of the scene development centers on answering the five questions below. Answers to the questions are incorporated into a scene that the group then practices and performs for the other groups. The five questions are:

1) Who is the scene about?

2) What is the problem?

3) Where does it take place?

4) Who are the characters?

5) What is the last line of the scenario?

The last line of the scene is the focus of the conflict being portrayed. After the last line is delivered the 'actors' stay in character and answer questions from the audience. This question and answer period allows for rich exploration of issues among both the audience and the actors.

a multiplicity of learners enrolled in a diversity of program types and settings using an array of data collection methods by a large and diverse group of researchers. The project engaged an evaluator who facilitated a participatory evaluation process midway through the research project, which served to inform the subsequent data collection and analysis activities.

Adult literacy and education practitioners and researchers shaped the conception of the project. The implementation of the project was supported and revised with the expertise of learners, a methodological consultant, researchers, an evaluator, and a research advisory board. Analysis was ongoing throughout the project, allowing for extensive discussion about alternative explanations and also helping to direct further and deeper investigation.

The sensitive nature of the three issues ethically dictated stringent attention to confidentiality and informed consent. The use of a PAR design in which those conducting the research were also affected by one or more of the issues helped significantly to ensure that consent was indeed informed.

## *Significance and Limitations*

Participatory action research is a powerful means of gathering information on issues of concern in a specific setting. It is also a powerful means of gaining input from those whose input is often not solicited or heard. Through participatory action research, the Changes Project has painted a picture of the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work on adult learners at five adult literacy and education programs in Western Massachusetts. We would suggest that this picture is important for several reasons. One, it brings the knowledge of adult learners experiencing these three issues into the national conversation about welfare reform, immigration reform and the changing nature of work. Two, it broadens the discussion of the impact of these three issues by putting forth a model for understanding the complexity of the lives of adult learners affected by the issues. Three, it describes the ways in which adult learners are resilient and proactive in the face of often difficult and challenging circumstances; this in turn helps to dispel misconceptions about these adults and their peers. Finally, it can serve as a guide for learners and practitioners to learn and teach about issues of importance in their lives and their communities, and find ways to shape policies that affect them.

It is important to remember, however, that this is a study specific to adult learners at five programs in Western Massachusetts. There are differences in welfare policies from state to state and these might translate into different impact on adult learners. In addition, the circumstances of newcomer learners vary as a function of their immigration status, current residence

and the country or countries from which they come. Workers and workplaces vary considerably, and although there was a diversity of workers and workplaces represented in this study, important differences abound. Finally, while the programs involved in this study represent a diversity of education service providers, it's important to be mindful of the differences between our five programs and other programs across the country. Differences in structure, philosophy, funding, and location might influence the ways in which learners experience the impact of any one of the three issues.

The experiences and expertise of the learners who participated in this study can serve as a basis for further discussion about the ways in which social policies and trends intersect with adult learners' achievement of their education goals. The findings and recommendations can bring focus to areas of challenge for learners, educators, and policy makers and can highlight possible avenues for reshaping policy and practice.

## *Continuing and Further Questions*

The multiple layers and complexity of the Changes Project highlighted areas for further investigation. There was a lot of evidence in our data about the importance of voice for learners, particularly on learners developing both an internal and external voice. Voice, and its importance to learners as they pursue their education goals, is also an aspect of the ongoing Equipped for the Future work being done by the National Institute for Literacy. Based on the data we collected, further investigation might focus on:

- The ways in which external voice both connects learners to the world and to other people, and allows them to participate in the world and to change it. For example, a Mentor Program researcher expressed the way her voice developed through a metaphor: "To me, my voice is like a chisel. It's a tool. I was born with a voice, but education has given me the skills to use it well, to use it effectively, to reach other people and make a difference with my voice." Investigation in this area might continue to develop a picture of the ways in which social policy, such as welfare reform and immigration reform, affect learners' development of voice and subsequent actions they are or aren't able to take.

Collectively, we urge learners and teachers to engage in further research that builds on the work of the Changes Project in ways that make sense for classrooms and communities.

- The connections between education and the role it plays in supporting learners' ability to speak out, to develop their self-confidence, to participate in society and to connect to the world warrant deeper investigation. This connects strongly to the work of Equipped for the Future.

- The ways positive and negative internal voices are related to self-confidence. For example, we heard from many newcomer learners about their own low-estimation of their English speaking skills, despite the fact that they had highly developed English communication skills. Another aspect of this question is: what is the impact of societal stereotypes on self-esteem and the use of voice? Further investigation in this area might be useful for practitioners refining their curricula and classroom practice and would also provide a rich and exciting classroom-based investigation.

As a whole project, we agreed it would be important to conduct further investigation on the ways in which engagement in participatory action research links with the achievement of education goals. Specifically this includes:

- How literacy is enhanced by research that is focused and conducted by learners.
- Examination of classroom-based research models.
- How learners' support systems get developed through involvement in a participatory action research project.

We suggest that investigation done in these areas might further inform the ongoing national discussion about standards and assessment.

We would also suggest continuing investigation on work and the changing workplace by learners and practitioners, including:

- Examining workplace and career needs of adult basic education learners and understanding how to build connections between basic education and local employment opportunities. This kind of research, done by learners and practitioners could serve as a strong partner to work done by economic development entities, local workforce development groups, and local and state education agencies.
- Developing an action research project for newcomer workers to investigate what forces prevent them from securing employment and how they can address these forces. Again, research by learners and practitioners in this area would deepen and broaden the local dialogue on employability and economic development.

There was also interest in continuing the work of the Changes Project by:

- Developing a longitudinal study to revisit research team members at regular intervals to understand the long-term impact of being involved in the Changes Project.
- Doing the same with the welfare recipients we heard from.

Finally, other, new questions and areas arose as foci for further study:

- How learners can most effectively influence and change state and federal policy.
- Further examination of the use of metaphors by welfare recipients.
- Research collaborations among multiple agencies: the process, benefits, and issues.
- The role of community colleges in supporting participatory action research projects.

Collectively, we urge learners and teachers to engage in further research that builds on the work of the Changes Project in ways that make sense for their classrooms and communities.

# Appendix One: Site Sections

The following narratives are a place in this report for each Changes Project team to tell readers about a significant aspect of their involvement in the Project that is not included in the report that precedes this section. You'll see that each team found a way to participate in the project in a way that worked best for them. Each also has a different sense of the impact of their participation, and how that impact will influence them – now and in the future – as individuals, learners, institutions and as members of a larger community.

## Center for New Americans

From its formation, the CNA team has been very concerned with how our research work and findings would serve to help people. For that reason the team choose to call itself, the Hand-to-Hand Action Team, or HAT team for short. We saw ourselves as reaching out our hands to help each other as team members as well as reaching out our hands to help other students at CNA. As we moved through the research process we saw many examples of how other CNA students also help each other. During one of our rounds of data analysis, team member, Ivonne Rivera, dug into the interviews on workplace issues to uncover the following quote:

> "For your career, don't give up. Keep working and teaching, keep helping people. Help! That you build friendship and you build for the future. You build for your reputation, if people have a problem just help. That's the best you can do, just help. Help people, help your friend, help for your future."

Ivonne noted other ideas voiced by interviewees about the importance of newcomers helping each other as they worked to build their new lives in the United States. Some people also talked about the need for help and support from institutions such as CNA, government agencies, and the INS. As she examined these ideas, Ivonne developed the metaphor of the Garden of Support to describe the exchange of help. To describe the garden, she wrote:

> "Social problems are like 'acid rain,' but maybe with some educational sunshine we could support the development of beautiful flowers... The quotations [like the one above] that I chose [show] a link to a good future with the help received from others, including the system, and the help that we have to give to others, I agree with them. Most of the newcomers arrive full of hopes, goals, and good things to bring to the future and the system could take advantage of that. The system could give the basic support to achieve these goals and in exchange of that could ask newcomers of today to be the facilitators of the newcomers of tomorrow."

As a team, we saw ourselves as responsible for working in this garden. We were learning a great deal from the research and believed that we had a responsibility for putting this information to good use. One way we did this was through making presentations to CNA students, to the CNA staff, to teachers from around the state, and to lawmakers. Each presentation included recommendations for how to better meet the needs of newcomers. The presentations and recommendations were well received.

As we neared the end of the research project, we wanted to find a way to convey our final findings and recommendations to CNA, our home organization. Team member Bussarakum Humphrey suggested we look at all the findings statements from the three issue areas and think about what CNA could do to help people cope with any problems arising from the findings. We acted upon her suggestion. We also realized that we wanted to acknowledge all the positive programs and practices that already exist at CNA to help newcomers. We worked together to write a report, and decided to include this report as part of the Changes Project report to show our unique ways of working and our preoccupations as a team.

What follows is our evaluation of what CNA does well in helping people to cope with our findings on immigration reform, welfare reform, and the changing workplace as well as recommendations to CNA about adding services to improve the program. This report was presented at a CNA staff meeting. Recommendations are being implemented as part of CNA's five year planning process.

Although the information that follows is directed specifically to the Center for New Americans, the models, ideas, and recommendations could apply to any organization working with immigrants, refugees, and migrants. The Garden of Support can be planted and nurtured at any organization.

**What Center for New Americans Does Well**

CNA helps, advises, and gives support to the people who can't speak enough English. CNA teaches English and computer, and helps with citizenship; these are very important needs for immigrants and newcomers. CNA asks students what they need and want to study, and helps them to learn those things. CNA teachers also introduce information about US systems so that people will learn how to get what they need in this new country.

CNA classes help people to build self-esteem and confidence, which is very important because people learning English are sometimes afraid to talk and do new things like computers or work in an office. Teachers are helpful in so many ways. They give counseling, sign important papers for students, and are like psychologists. This assistance helps students deal with the

the transition to a new culture (and weather!). Teachers work to build self-esteem and confidence. When teachers see a worried student, they ask the student what is happening, which gives the student a chance to talk about and try to fix problems. If you miss class, the teacher calls to find out what is wrong. They give you personal attention and help.

Everyone at CNA – teachers and staff – gets to know the students as people and believes that they can do important things. They ask about your life or family and then remember what you told them. They encourage you to do jobs and projects for CNA, like teach computer or do research. Even when you don't think you can do it or think you do it badly, they encourage you and tell you that you are doing OK. They help you learn new things so you can do your project or job better. You start to believe you can do the work and speak English. You feel more confident. The jobs at CNA are very good and important.

CNA knows that people have to work and tries to find the best time for classes for people who are working.

CNA helps people to connect with more advanced English classes or college when they finish so they can keep studying.

**What Else Center for New Americans Could Do**

1. Add supports to help people get jobs.

We know that many students and graduates want to know more about getting jobs or getting better jobs. At first we talked about CNA starting an employment agency. Some students wrote this as a suggestion on the survey. This seemed like a big thing to do. Then we talked about letting more students know we get job postings, and having a person whom students and graduates could talk to about jobs and rights in the workplace. Students and graduates could have a support group on getting a better job and getting help for problems in the workplace. Staff, students, and graduates also could talk to workplaces about CNA and make sure they send us job postings and hire people from CNA. This idea is like a "Career Development Office" at colleges.

2. Involve more students and graduates in the organization so they can improve their abilities.

Help them to work as volunteers in the office. This can help them improve their skills (English and job skills). Have speakers' group of students and graduates. This group can talk with important people, American people, and employers about how not all immigrants are bad people. Tell them about the people who are studying and finishing from CNA.

3. Provide more classes. For example:

    - More advanced classes
    - A pronunciation class
    - More advanced computer classes. Computer students who do not have computers at home have also asked us to further develop our program of loaning out older computers for students to practice on at home.

4. Provide transportation and childcare.

5. CNA could do more to let people know about its programs.

Many people don't know about CNA and what CNA is doing. CNA could make flyers and put them in big, important places. CNA could go to the newspaper and tell about English, computer, citizenship work, and that we keep a book of job postings. Also talk to newcomers about the importance of learning English, about the good things that you can do when you learn English.

6. Increase immigration support services

Maybe get a new person (like a counselor) who really knows what happens in the system and have them give information for students because right now people have to go to Boston. This person needs to know about all immigration issues (green card, visa, etc) and benefits for immigrants.

**How Center for New Americans Could Pay For These Programs**

1. Approach the Department of Education and explain to them that it is important to have CNA grow.

2. Go to the cities and towns where we are and ask them for money for these projects.

3. Ask individuals – community members and graduates, for example – to give money to support these projects.

4. Look for foundations that support particular areas like minorities, immigrants, leadership development, children, women, workers' rights, etc.

## International Language Institute

### How it All Started

When some of the students at the International Language Institute became interested in participating in the Changes Project, it was clear that their main goal was to improve their language skills. It was yet another opportunity for them to practice their English. They were afraid in the beginning and sometimes hesitant when the different sites got together since some Changes Project participants were native English speakers.

Little by little as we met weekly, it was amazing how ILI's team members developed their own voices. They became more self-confident as they began to understand the work we were doing. They were proud to be part of such unique project, and the idea of making a difference motivated them tremendously. They overcame the language obstacles because they felt supported by all of the other participants in the project. Their fear of presenting in front of a group of people turned into a desire to share their work. They wanted to tell people what they were doing. They wanted other institutions to know they can have a voice to help their students. They were eager to let the world know they were trying to help their peers.

### Listening to Stories

As we started talking to ILI's students and listening to their stories, we became aware of the complexity of people's lives. We were sometimes shocked to learn about the issues immigrants are faced with. We were shocked to learn how afraid immigrants are of speaking up and the assumptions they make about not being eligible for benefits.

There is one particular story we would like to share with you in this section. This was the most compelling story we heard. One that will always remain in our minds and hearts (personal information was modified to protect confidentiality).

#### The Story of an Immigrant in the USA

Andrea came to this country 3 years ago. She wanted to study English and get a Master's degree. She also wanted to be with her husband who is a legal resident of the US. She came from Peru as a tourist and was planning to change her status to become a resident.

After getting pregnant with her first baby, she was not able to leave the country because if she did she would not be able to return. This meant she would have to give birth to her baby away from her husband. So she stayed in the USA, and her tourist visa expired.

When Andrea went to the Immigration Office to present the application to adjust her status, she found out that she was not eligible because her husband was not a citizen. In order for her to change her status, her husband needed to become a citizen. The process of becoming a citizen is taking from 1 to 3 years.

Her main reason for changing her visa status was to be able to get a Social Security number so she could work and study. Because she was not able to change her status, she can't work, go to school or travel until her husband becomes a citizen. She had to decide between going back to her country or staying here with her husband and son.

It has been a year and Andrea still can't work, can't study and can't go to her country to visit with her family. She can't even get a driver's license. She can't get health insurance either. Her biggest frustration is that she hasn't been able to start her process of becoming a resident. Her only choice is to "wait".

Even though she has learned a lot in this country and she doesn't regret the fact that she decided to stay here to be with her husband and her son; she still hates the fact that immigration takes so long.

## The Mentor Program

Members of the Mentor Program team decided that they wanted to include in this report a description of the work we are doing with metaphors. In addition to surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the Mentor Program collected data for the Changes Project in some of the writing classrooms we offer to college-bound ABE learners. The classes that served as data collection sites were attended by welfare recipients who are either community college students or learners from two ABE programs in Holyoke. The data they generated included poetry, essays and letters that were written both individually and in groups. Members of the Mentor Program research team co-taught the writing classes, and contributed their own writing to the data as well.

During the first phase of analysis, Mentor team members became intrigued by the idea of using metaphor analysis to further our understanding of the data learners were generating in writing classrooms. Metaphor analysis is a useful tool for examining written language data. Metaphors can be highly compressed, richly creative forms of figurative language through which people express their unique experiences and perceptions of a given subject. Metaphor analysis can also reveal much about cognition, highlighting the conceptual structures people draw upon and create when making a metaphor.

When creating a metaphor, one is essentially filling a gap in language by linking two different semantic domains into one. Changes Project participants are often dealing with new or unprecedented situations, whether they are welfare recipients in a "post-welfare" era, or learners preparing for jobs in a drastically changing job market. New situations require new means of expression, and metaphors, because they can bridge gaps in language, create new expressions to reflect these new situations. Learning to analyze metaphors can also aid understanding of how people from different cultural, language and social groups make meaning out of similar situations. Our work with metaphors has helped us to reach a deeper understanding of the ideological and conceptual bases of people's experiences and their perceptions of the issues we're investigating. The metaphors themselves often suggest new areas of inquiry, guiding subsequent phases of data collection.

The metaphor analysis process we developed as a team evolved into a variety of activities which serve a number of research and teaching purposes. We used what we were learning about metaphors to generate and analyze data, and we used metaphor analysis to develop a number of writing activities in the writing classrooms and workshops we facilitated. This dual purpose reflects the complementary goals of the Changes Project as a whole: 1) to find out how social, economic and political changes are affecting adult learners and 2) to apply what

is being learned (about learners' lives, about classroom-based participatory research, and about teaching) to inform and improve classroom practice. Below is an outline of the metaphor analysis process developed by the Mentor Program and a brief description of one of the writing workshop activities that evolved from our growing interest in metaphors.

**Analyzing Metaphors**

The Mentor Program team analyzed both individual metaphors generated by participants as well as the metaphorical concepts to which they belong. We define metaphor as an expression which aids the understanding of one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. This definition is based on the notion that metaphors do more than simply compare words, ideas, or concepts: they set up a relationship between two or more conceptual domains (Basso 1976; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Turner 1987; Glucksberg & Keysar 1990; Ortony 1993). Some metaphors make explicit connections between two conceptual domains: "Support is a suit of armor". Others make implicit connections: "I have a ***good network of support*** to help me stay in school."

***Metaphorical concepts*** are the larger concepts to which all individual metaphors belong. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posit that the ordinary human conceptual system governing our thoughts and structuring our perceptions, actions, and relations, is "fundamentally metaphorical in nature"(3). Numerous studies (Basso 1976; Schon 1979; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Turner 1987; Fiumara 1995) highlight the pervasiveness of metaphorical concepts in everyday thought, and show how metaphors both reflect and help to shape peoples' conceptual systems, physical experiences, relationships to and perceptions of the world.

The metaphor analysis process developed by the Mentor Program, based on the ideas of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Basso (1976), involves three main steps:

- generating a list of entailments (logical extensions of the metaphor's meaning)
- analyzing the metaphor's dimensions (i.e., up-down; inside-outside)
- charting the two or more semantic domains being linked in the metaphor (i.e. education – key)

An important function of metaphors is that they highlight certain shared properties of the categories or conceptual domains they entail. With this in mind, entailments, or logical extensions of meaning, can be generated for any metaphor by detailing these shared properties. For example, in the metaphor "education is a key" (contributed by a Mentor team member), key highlights certain properties that it shares with education, such as the ability to open things (doors, opportunities, certain kinds of knowledge); the experience of being locked

inside or outside of a place; and the need for skills, tools and knowledge in order to gain access to a place. Like all metaphors, "education is a key" creates a single conceptual domain in which the meanings associated with education and key are semantically connected. Clearly, analyzing a single, simple metaphor like "education is a key" can yield a great deal of information about a person's perceptions about education, particularly when the metaphor maker is available to help generate the list of entailments. When clusters of metaphors related to the same theme are analyzed, the emerging picture becomes richer and more complex.

Although highlighting shared properties is a major function of metaphors, metaphors tend to *hide* more than they highlight (Basso 1976; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Turner 1987; Katz et al 1998). In a metaphor supplied by another Mentor Program team member, "support is a suit of armor," the shared properties of *support* and *suit of armor* are limited, while there are many more aspects of the two that do not enter into the single semantic domain created in this metaphor. In other words, while *suit of armor* highlights the aspects of *support* that protect people from harm, it does not address other important aspects of support. It provides a partial picture of the kinds of supports participants need and the ways they create, use, give, and perceive of the concept of support. Again, analyzing a variety of different metaphors about each theme being investigated can provide a comprehensive understanding of the meaning participants associate with these themes. For example, the variety of metaphors partcipants provided for the idea of support include a *suit of armor, a net, a tree, a wall,* and *an ant colony.*

**Generating Metaphors in Writing Classrooms**

The metaphor analysis process developed by the Mentor Program evolved into a technique for generating poems in writing workshops. The workshops begin with a general discussion about metaphors. Then participants are asked to create metaphors for the themes they want to write about, one of which is chosen to begin the first stanza of a poem. Facilitators then question the participants to expand the meaning of the original metaphor, a process similar to the generating of entailments that is part of the metaphor analysis process. A facilitator writes down the expanded meanings and the poem takes shape. Below is part of a poem generated in a metaphor workshop at an adult literacy program:

> Learning to read and write is the moon.
> At night the moon follows you everywhere:
> It's a light that shines in the dark.

The stanza above begins with a simple metaphor, contributed by a learner, which is then expanded through a questioning process. The facilitator could expand the stanza further by

asking the learner: "What does the moonlight allow you to see?" or "What is life like without moonlight?" We have found that, even in a short workshop, participants can produce at least one complete poem. Each poem is a coherent whole, offering a unique view of a groups' experiences, perceptions, aspirations, and so on.

Another poem created using this process is *Metaphors of My Life*, written by teen parents in a writing workshop in October 1998.

Metaphors of My Life
My life is a tree.
It is strong,
it bears fruit.
My life has roots.
The roots are the force that makes the tree grow.
My life has branches.
They are the members of my family
and my different experiences.
The leaves of my life change color.
Throughout the winter they fall on the ground.
In spring my life returns to flower again.

My children are my sky.
One is a star that shines brightly through the night.
The other is a beautiful morning
or a dove that flies through the air.
Sometimes my child is a twister,
other times she is the sun that warms my life on cold days
or the rain that falls like tears to the ground.

Education is a key
that opens doors toward the path of my future.
At times it is difficult to find
the right door for my life.
Other times it is easier
when the doors offer me opportunities.
The doors of my mind also open
with education.

My future is a road
to paradise,
to the world
and toward happiness.
This road goes every which way.
My future moves like the waves
that are the wings of the sea.

Expanding simple metaphors is a process that allows writers to examine, reflect upon, expand, and create ideas as a group. In this way, participants and facilitators together learn about themselves and each other. This same process can easily be tailored to the individual writer as well. We have adapted this process for large and small classrooms, teacher training workshops, and conference presentations.

What is most important for the purposes of the Changes Project is that the activity described here has the potential to accomplish multiple goals: It can add much to our knowledge about learners' experiences and perceptions. Simultaneously, it can greatly enhance learners' literacy skills. We found, for instance, that many of the writers who participated in our workshops developed a new appetite, as well as an aptitude, for reading and writing, through their increased awareness of metaphors. Like the Mentor Program team, several learners were bitten by the "metaphor bug;" they continued writing poems on their own, using the technique described here. Others became highly attuned to the metaphors leaping out of the pages of their books, which they identified eagerly for the benefit of their teachers and peers. Members of the Mentor Program team were very gratified to hear that our own enthusiasm for the richly imaginative linguistic expression – the metaphor – could be so contagious, and that this contagion could have such a positive effect on people's abilities and desires to read and write.

## LMWEP at UM/Amherst

### Why LMWEP Joined the Changes Project

When representatives from Western Massachusetts adult education, ESOL, and workplace education programs met to explore the possibility of submitting a proposal for collaborative educational research, LMWEP was interested in a participatory research project that would address questions about the workplace that had been raised by members of our program's union partners on campus and would involve adult learners from our program. Our program has involved workers in several participatory research project. Some past LMWEP research projects have included classes about job changes in changing times, research with union members concerning worker involvement in management-initiated continuous quality improvement systems, and research projects and workplace surveys concerning the effects of stress and technology on workers and their jobs. LMWEP proposed the effects of the changing workplace on workers and adult learners as a topic for the Changes Project research proposal because it is an issue that's important to UM/Amherst workers, as well as learners at adult education and ESOL programs in our region.

### Methods and Activities Employed for this Study

Members of the UM/Amherst research team decided to use standard research tools of surveys, focus groups, and interviews, but the team adapted these methods in an attempt to reach the diverse members of the university's workforce and LMWEP learners.

Interviews: As described elsewhere in this report, team members did conduct 12 interviews with individual workers. But some team members reported that they were having a hard time getting co-workers to agree to doing interviews, because these workers feared that information that they shared about effects of the changing workplace, their experiences on the job, and their career and educational goals might become public and put their jobs at risk. Researchers also experienced some tension around doing interviews about the workplace while on-site, and finding both a time and place for conducting interviews that was truly confidential was problematic for some team members. These issues around confidentiality seemed to affect office workers more than the AFSCME service workers.

Focus Groups: The UM/Amherst researchers decided to conduct more focus groups and group interviews than this study had originally proposed, as a way to allow for more honest and in-depth conversation about the changing workplace. One of the team members coined the term "SPACE groups" for these discussions. "Let's make SPACE to talk," our flyer stated, proclaiming these groups to be a Safe Place Allowing Communication and Exchange.

We found that individuals were more willing to share their workplace experiences in a group of workers, particularly if one person brought up an issue or experience that other workers had observed or experienced too. One personnel director on campus supported this project and arranged with a few supervisors for a half-hour of release time, added to employee's lunch time, for four of the focus groups. Other focus groups met during LMWEP classes, department or union offices. A total of eight groups were conducted.

Surveys: The UM/Amherst team spent more than a year writing and re-writing a survey addressing workers' experiences with classism, the changing workplace, and training and education. Because of the wide range of language skills, education, and jobs performed by the more than 2000 workers we planned to mail the survey to, a great deal of fine-tuning went into the survey, and several versions were piloted at LMWEP classes and with team members' co-workers. Team members received feedback on drafts of the survey from their co-workers, from professional survey writers at the university's office of Student Affairs Research, Information and Systems, and from the principal investigator for this study at UM/Amherst, Dr. Joseph Connolly. Classism and treatment in the workplace based on job classification were identified by team members as issues that their co-workers talked about and wanted to address, so those issues were included in the survey as well, though for the purposes of this study, not all of those questions were directly related to workplace changes.

**Other LMWEP Changing Workplace Activities**

Team members have helped to develop analytical tools used at the Changes Project analysis fest gatherings. Researchers coded and analyzed interviews and transcripts. They read articles and information about national and international changing workplace trends. They developed a role-play of a changing workplace SPACE focus group as a "composite story" of our findings, created a newscast narrative to present findings, and participated in activities and panels at several conferences where we presented our research work. Researchers were interviewed for a radio show about classism and the changing workplace and conducted a training for university employees about classism and workplace changes. They also shared our research with their departments, co-workers, and unions to foster development of a career ladders program at the university. During 1999, privatization of university services and jobs became a major changing workplace issue, and several team members have addressed that issue in their union work. Two researchers have written articles and essays about this research and their own workplace experiences. Based on their own work and information gathered during this project, several team members have been exploring ways to involve classified staff in team management trainings and to improve workplace dynamics and communication.

**Creating Support in the Workplace**

The most consistent feedback received from group members has been that their involvement in this project has given them support as classified staff, and provided an opportunity to hear about work in other departments that confirms their own experiences and observations. Researchers often spoke positively about the contacts and associations they made with other workers during this project - most notably the associations that developed between USA/MTA office workers and AFSCME service workers, who usually don't interact.

Generosity and goodwill abounded among the researchers. One of our team members came to meetings with desserts, candy, and cold drinks when the weather was hot, and brought cut flowers and goodies to the analysis fest gatherings. Another organized a summer cookout, a party for the children of Changes Project participants, and collected toys and contributions from donors to give away at our gatherings. Many collaborations, friendships, support, and a deeper understanding of each other as workers and as people resulted from the two years that we met.

## Read/Write/Now

The most unique and meaningful pieces of our work at Read/Write/Now have to do with the techniques and activities we created to assist us in engaging with our data without relying solely on text. As one team member described it, "Our writing is not so good, so we like to use different ways to express our feelings". We created a series of visual representations of our work that we used for the purposes of analysis, exploration, representation and presentation. We felt that, as one team member summed up, "the visuals we made tell the story". These include our use of trees; our use of a composite story (which we represented visually through a series of pictures, and verbally through the telling of the story); the creation of a social action theater piece; a "garden of knowledge" mapping exercise and visual we used for data analysis; the "constellation of findings" we created for our final series of presentations; and the book, "Out on a Limb."

The process of creating these visual representations significantly enhanced our learning. They were processes all members of our team could engage in, regardless of literacy levels, and helped each of us to feel more invested in, and to have more ownership of, our work. They helped us to engage in and process our data, to become clearer about what we knew and what we wanted to know more about, and to present our learning to others. We received positive feedback each time we used one of our visual representations to present our work – at conferences, at our Analysis Fests, and at rallies. They helped us to access and present our learning, and the positive responses we received encouraged us to feel our work was meaningful. "When the people see our work they always think it's good. We're creative. People know that," one team member commented. This helped us to become even more creative with, and committed to, our work. A second team member described these experiences this way:

> "I like it because when we went to different colleges people [really responded]. I don't feel like a nobody no more, I feel like a somebody. I've dreamed of college. When I'm there, I know I can do it. There's no difference between me and the college people. You don't have to have college knowledge to know it all. Each time we go there, it inspires me more."

Another member added:

> "We get good feedback, we know what we're doing isn't a waste of time. They see our work and they enjoy it. It's not them out there doing it, it's us. It kind of makes my head swell, put it that way, because they enjoy it [our presentations]."

**Data Analysis, Mapping Our Knowledge, and Ongoing Questioning**

As mentioned above, one ongoing challenge we had at Read/Write/Now was how to engage with all of the information we were gathering: our interviews, focus groups and surveys; conversations with guest speakers; and participation in conference workshops. We wanted to do this without focusing solely on, or becoming overwhelmed by, text. Several team members were just beginning to learn to read and write, and poring through transcripts, for example, was not only extremely time consuming, but often frustrating and alienating.

We came up with several different methods. Since we taped all of our focus groups and interviews, we were able to listen to the tapes – instead of relying solely on the written transcriptions – as one method of beginning to analyze and map our data. It was time consuming, since our team meetings were usually only two to three hours per week, and we often had ten to fifteen hours of tapes to listen to for each phase. Sometimes it was frustrating; we got distracted and bored with listening meeting after meeting. During the last phase, we decided to have an all-day workshop/analysis 'celebration' of sorts at one of our homes. We listened and mapped all day, taking plenty of breaks for tea and snacks. We spread out across the living room floor, made ourselves as comfortable as we could, and in the evening when we were finished, had a barbecue and feasted. That was by far our team's most productive day of analysis, we were able to immerse ourselves completely, we found that we were less distracted, we learned more, and enjoyed ourselves at the same time.

As we listened, we used several methods for mapping our data. One of the most successful we called the 'Garden of Knowledge,' an idea that the team conceived and developed. As we listened, we mapped what we were hearing onto a large drawing of a garden. As categories began to emerge from our listening the garden evolved into several different features. The key follows:

The Garden of Knowledge - Key

The Fertilizer: needs
The Soil: school, education, or Read/Write/Now
The Bugs that Eat the Vegetables: barriers (to meeting goals)
The Green Vegetables: supports – or sources of strength – that people already have in their lives
The Corn: goals
The Garden Tools: what people said helped them to meet their goals (e.g.: personal determination; hopes and dreams; wanting to be a role model for my children)
The Sun: voice
The Scarecrow: challenges

The Evil Centipede: the parts of Welfare Reform that have made it hard for people to reach their goals

Broccoli and Carrots: supports people provide for others

A team member summarized the Garden in this way: "The Garden was great. We put in all the things that were positive and negative for people, all the things that were supportive or where more support was negative." We were able to use our Garden in various ways. It helped us to articulate categories based on what we were hearing and it helped us to focus our listening. Later, it helped us to identify patterns and emerging themes. It was well suited to our particular needs, interests and styles. We found it to be very useful and illuminating as a tangible and accessible map of our data.

Another method we used was **The Tree**. I put **The Tree** in bold because we used it in so often and in so many different ways that it became almost a mascot for our team, a symbol that took on a life of its own. We borrowed the idea from the field of popular education, and then adapted it to suit our purposes. A detailed description of the way we used our trees is located in the Methods section of this report.

**A Final Note on Analysis and a Note on Synthesis**

As we learned more and more, we began to wonder how we could represent what we learned to others. Listing our findings and presenting outlines seemed so far away from the people we knew – their realities and their stories - and so foreign to our own process as a team. We came up with two methods, the theater scenarios (mentioned in the Analysis section) and the composite story (outlined below) that helped us to continue to analyze and synthesize our data, as well as present it in an evocative manner. Other project members, who contributed their time and expertise to help us, inspired these methods.

For the composite story we created a person named Carolyn Hicks. She was not a real person, yet every part of her life story mirrored pieces of stories we heard from participants. She was a conglomerate, representing no one person, yet in some way reflective of each. Her creation served as a means for us to re-examine our data and synthesize our learning. The telling of her story helped our research to come alive when we presented our findings to others. We used a storyboard, with visual representations of the various phases of her life, to help us in telling her story to audiences.

## Appendix Two: References


Abramovitz, M. (1996). *Under attack, fighting back. Women and welfare in the United States.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Albelda, R. (April 1999). *Welfare to what?: A look at the Department of Transitional Assistance's report on families leaving welfare.* Boston: Working Massachusetts.

Albelda, R. & Tilly, C. (1997). *Glass ceilings and bottomless pits: Women's work, women's poverty.* Boston: South End Press.

Archer, D. & Cottingham, S. (1996) *The reflect mother manual: A new approach to adult literacy.* London: ACTIONAID.

Basso, Keith (1976). 'Wise words' of the Western Apache: Metaphor and semantic theory. In K.H. Basso (Ed.), *Meaning in anthropology* (pp. 93-121). Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Brilliant-Keener, J. (1999, October 17). Well-rounded workers are in demand: Changing workscape focuses on flexibility. *Boston Globe* (Careers '99, special section), 3, 8, 9.

Careers '99. (1999, October 17). *Boston Globe.* Special section.

Carnevale, A., & Desrochers, D. (1999). Getting down to business: *Matching welfare recipients' skills to jobs that train.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Coelen, S. (1993). Beyond 2000: *Demographic changes, education and the work force.* University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA: Massachusetts, Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER). Copyright, NELLIE MAE and MISER.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1996). *Protean literacy: Extending the discourse on empowerment.* Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Dick, B. (1997). *A beginner's guide to action research.* Available on line at: http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/guide.html or http://www.uq.net.au/action_research/arp/guide.html

Dujon, D. & Withorn, A. (1996). *For crying out loud. Women's poverty in the United States.* Boston: South End Press.

Edelmen, P. (1999, July 8). Clinton's cosmetic poverty tour. *The New York Times*, p. A9.

Emery, T. (1999, March 9). Welfare advocates dispute state data. *The Daily Hampshire Gazette*, p. A1.

Fiumara, G. C. (1995). *The metaphoric process: Connections between language and life.* New York: Routledge.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Seabury Press.

Glucksberg, S., & Keysar, B. (1990). *Understanding metaphorical comparisons: Beyond similarity.* Psychological Review, 97(1), 3 -18.

Hull, G. (Ed.). (1997). *Changing work, changing workers.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Kates, E. (1998). *Closing doors: Declining opportunities in education for low-income women.* Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Heller School, Welfare Education Training and Access Coalition.

Katz, A., Cacciari, C., Gibbs, R., & Turner, M. (1998). *Figurative language and thought.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Kirsch, I.S., Jungeblut, A., Jenkins, L., & Kolstad, A. (1993). *Adult literacy in America: A first look at the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Labor/Management Workplace Education Program, University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1992). *Survey of Franklin and Hampshire county employers and labor unions.* Amherst, MA: Author

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levenson, A., Reardon, E., & Schmidt, S. (1999) *Welfare, jobs, and basic skills: The employment prospects of welfare recipients in the most populous U.S. counties.* Washington, DC: The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

Maguire, P. (1987). *Doing participatory research: a feminist approach.* Amherst, MA: The Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts.

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. (1990). Long-range program 1991 – 1996. Boston: Author.

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance. (April, 1999). How are they doing?: A longitudinal study of households leaving welfare under Massachusetts reform. Boston: Author.

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute & Family Economic Initiative. (1999, April 7). *A closer look at the thousands of families losing benefits under the Massachusetts time limit.* Boston: Authors.

Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (1997). *Closing the gap: Raising skills to raise wages.* Boston: Author.

McDonnell, P. J. (1999, June 14). INS Denials of Citizenship Climb Sharply. *Los Angeles Times*, p. A1.

Meckler, L. (1999, June 18). Ex-Welfare Recipients Studied. *The Boston Globe*, p. A20.

National Institute for Literacy. (1995, July). ***Equipped for the future: A customer-driven vision for adult literacy and lifelong learning***. Washington, DC: Author.

National Institute for Literacy. (1999, April 12). ***White paper for 1999 National Literacy Forum***. Washington, DC: Author.

National Priorities Project. (1996). ***Reality checks: America's heart and soul***. Northampton, MA: Author.

National Priorities Project Grassroots Factbook (December 1998). ***Working hard, earning less: The story of job growth in Massachusetts***. (Vol. 1, series 2). Northampton, MA: Author.

Ortony, A. (Ed.). (1993). ***Metaphor and thought***. (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Park, P. (1998, June). Forms of Knowledge. ***Participatory action research*** workshop. Workshop conducted at the People's Institute, Deerfield, MA. [See also: Park, P. (1999, June 1). People, knowledge, and change in participatory research. ***Management learning: The journal of managerial and organization learning***, 30, 2, pp. 141-158.]

Schon, D.A. (1979). Generative metaphors: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy. In A. Ortony (Ed.), ***Metaphor and thought*** pp. 137-163. (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Selener, D. (1997). ***Participatory action research and social change***. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Participatory Action Research Network.

Turner, M. (1987). ***Death is the mother of beauty: Mind, metaphor, criticism***. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

U.S. Department of Labor. (1999, September). Futurework: Trends and challenges for work in the 21st century. Washington, DC: Author. Available on line at: http://www.dol.gov/dol/asp/public/futurework/report.htm

Wong, D.S. (1999, June 18). Areas' growth seen easing welfare-to-work transition. *The Boston Globe*, p. B3.

178

### *Changes Project / Phase I*
### *Cross-site interview questions*

These questions were generated by Research Teams, consolidated by Site Research Facilitators, the Project Coordinator and the Methodological Consultant and finalized and field-tested by Research Teams. Teams will use these questions.

#### Learning and Achievement (all sites will ask questions in this category)

- Why did you come back to school, or decide to join this program?
- How does coming back to school help you get information that you need to manage your life?
- How does coming back to school help you to better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
- How does coming back to school help you to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
- How does coming back to school help you to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning, even after you are finished with this school?
- What kinds of support do you need to in order to be able to attend school? to get what you need from school?

#### Welfare Reform

- When you hear the words "welfare reform", what words or pictures come to mind?
- Are you currently receiving welfare benefits? If so, what are your plans for the next year? The next five years?
- If you did not have to think about welfare regulations or money, what would your plans be, for the next year? The next five years?
- What kinds of supports do you need to achieve your education and personal goals given the changes to welfare?
- What changes in the new welfare reform affect you the most?
- If English is not your native language, what is?
- How do the changes to welfare affect your ability to attend school?
- How do the changes to welfare affect your ability to get information that you need to manage your life?
- How do the changes to welfare affect your ability to better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
- How do the changes to welfare affect your ability to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
- How do the changes to welfare affect your ability to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning, even after you are finished with this school?
- Given the changes to welfare, what kinds of support do you need to in order to be able to attend school? to get what you need from school?
- Do you feel you are treated differently because English is not your native language?
- In what ways are you treated differently because English is not your native language?

## Changes in Immigration Policies

- What is your native country?
- When did you come here?
- Are you a US citizen?
- Can you tell me about some of the problems you are facing because you're not a US citizen?
- What have heard about the changes in laws and regulations that affect non-US citizens?
- In what ways do these changes or have these changes, affected you?
- How do these changes affect your ability to get information that you need to manage your life?
- How do these changes affect your ability to better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
- How do these changes affect your ability to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
- How do these changes affect your ability to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning, even after you are finished with this school?
- How do these changes affect your ability to attend school?
- What kinds of supports do you need to achieve your education and personal goals and you plans given the immigration policies?
- Given these changes, what kinds of support do you need to in order to be able to attend school? to get what you need from school?

## The Changing Nature of Work

- Do you have a job currently? If yes, what is it?
- If no, what was the job you had most recently? When was that?
- Do you have adequate training for the job you are doing now? or for the one you did most recently?
- What type of job would you like to have?
- What is it about that job that makes it one you would like to have?
- What skills or training do you need to do that job?
- What are the things you need to do or to have in order to get a promotion at your current job?
- How do you think that work or jobs have changed?
- Do you feel you are treated differently at work because English is not your native language?
- In what ways are you treated differently because English is not your native language?
- In what ways has coming back to school helped you with your job, or your search for a job?
- In what ways does school give you information you need to help with your job, or your job search?
- In what ways does school help you better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective at your work, or in your job search?
- In what ways does school help you to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you at work, or in your job search?
- In what ways does school help you to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning at work, or in your job search?
- How does your employment situation affect the kind of support you need to in order to be able to attend school? to get what you need from school?

180

## *The Center for New Americans*
## *Interview Guide*

Used in phases one and two (for exploring Learning and Achievement, Welfare Reform, Immigration Changes, and The Changing Nature of Work)

### ADULT LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT

1. Why did you decide to come to the classes at the Center for New Americans?
   — Why do you want to be able to speak English?
   (For Computer Students: Why do you want to learn about computers?)
   — How did you hear about the Center for New Americans?
2. What do you want to do or to have for yourself or your family in the next year? In the next 5 years?
   — What are your educational goals for the next year? for the next 5 years?
   — What are your work goals for the next year? for the next 5 years?
   — What are your family goals for the next year? for the next 5 years?
   — How has coming to CNA helped you to know more about what you need? About what is important to you? About what your goals are?
   • Have your needs or your goals changed because of coming to CNA?
3. How does coming to the Center for New Americans help you to meet your goals?
   — Tell me about 1 or 2 classroom activities that have helped you live your life outside of the classroom.
   • Describe the activity. What did you and your classmates do?
   • How did you use the information outside of the classroom? Where did you use it?
4. What gets in the way of you coming to class? What helps you to come to class?
5. How is being a student in the U.S. different from being a student in your native country?
6. Do you think the fact that you are studying English with people from different countries helps you to learn more?
   — How does it help you to learn?
   — What kinds of things does it help you to learn?

### IMMIGRATION ISSUES

1. Were you born a U.S. citizen (in the 50 states or Puerto Rico, for example)? If they answer Yes, skip to the next section on Welfare Reform.
2. What is your native country?
3. When did you come to the United States?
4. Why did you come to the United States?

5. What is it like to be an immigrant in the United States?
   — Are immigrants treated differently from citizens? How are they treated differently?
      • Can you give me an example from your own life?
      • Are government benefits (for example social security or food stamps) different for immigrants and citizens? How do you know this?
   — What kind of goals do you have as an immigrant?
      • Did being an immigrant affect your decision to come to class at CNA?
      • What do you need to achieve those goals?
   — If you need to return to your country, can you? Or will you have a problem?
   — Are you thinking about learning how to become a citizen?
      If Yes, Why are are you thinking about become a citizen?
      When did you make the decision to learn about becoming a citizen?
      Why is it important to be a citizen?
6. Have you heard about changes in Immigration Policy? If No skip to #7.
   — What changes have been made?
   — How do you feel about the changes?
   — Do you have any personal experiences with the changes?
      • Have the changes caused you any problems?
      • Have the changes affected your decision to come or to stay in school?
         – to go to work?
         – to apply for welfare?
      • Is your family separated because of the changes in immigration policies?
7. Imagine that in the future you become a citizen. As a new citizen of the United States, how would you defend the rights of other immigrants?

## *The Center for New Americans*
## *Interviews for Phase Three*

We will use the interview as a tool for talking with more advanced English speakers who are students in CNA's classes or computer lab.

Through asking these questions, we will learn more about:

- life experience of newcomers to this country;
- the barriers and obstacles newcomers face in this country, particularly around getting an education, becoming a citizen, and having a good job;
- the support that newcomers need to receive and give to others;
- the step-by-step process of becoming a citizen;
- newcomers understanding of and experience with immigration and welfare reform;
- newcomers experience of finding a job in a changing workplace.

**Interview Guide** (for exploring Learning and Achievement, Welfare Reform, Immigration Changes, and The Changing Nature of Work)

### ADULT LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT

1. Why do you want to be able to speak English? (For Computer Students: Why do you want to learn about computers?)
   — How did you hear about the Center for New Americans?
2. What goals do you have for yourself or your family in the future?
3. How does coming to the Center for New Americans help you to meet your goals?
   — Tell me about 1 or 2 classroom activities that have helped you live your life outside of the classroom.
      - What did you and your classmates do?
      - How did you use the information outside of the classroom? Where did you use it?
   — Have your needs or goals changed because of coming to CNA?
4. What kind of problems do you have to come to school?
   — (For people who are in school) You have these problems, but you are in school. How do you get around the problems? Who helps you to fix these problems?
5. What problems do people learning English have?
   — How do these problems affect people in living their lives?
   — Who creates these problems?
   — What suggestions do you have to remove these problems?
6. How is being a student in the U.S. different from being a student in your native country?
7. Do people help each other to learn in your CNA class?
   — How do they help each other?
   — What difference does this help make in your life?

## IMMIGRATION ISSUES

1. What does the word immigrant mean to you?
   — Do you think you are an immigrant? Why or why not?
2. Were you born a U.S. citizen (in the 50 states or Puerto Rico, for example)?
   If they answer Yes, skip to the next section on Welfare Reform.
   — What is your native country?
   — When did you come to the United States?
   — Why did you come to the United States?
3. How do you feel about being an "immigrant" in the United States?
4. Do you feel immigrants are treated the same as U.S. citizens?
   — How are they treated the same?
   — How are they treated differently?
5. What kind of help do immigrants need when they first arrive in the U.S.?
   — What kind of help do they need after they've been here a while, say... (Note: Think up a number based on how long you know they have been here?
   — Can you give me an example of the kinds of help youive needed since you came to the U.S.?
6. If you need to return to your country, can you? Or will you have a problem?
7. Are you thinking about learning how to become a citizen?
   If Yes, — Why are you thinking about become a citizen?
   — What do you know about the proces of becoming a citizen?
   — What kind of support will you need to finish the citizenship process?
8. What do you know about changes in programs for immigrants?
   — How do you feel about the changes?
   — Do you have any personal experiences with the changes?
   — Where did you hear about the changes?
9. Imagine that in the future you become a citizen. As a new citizen of the United States, how would you defend the rights of other immigrants?
10. What good things do immigrants offer to the United States? How do immigrants make the U.S. a better place?

## WELFARE

1. Do you receive welfare benefits now or have you received them in the past?
   If No skip to the next section.
2. When you hear the words "welfare reform" what words or pictures come to your mind?
   — What do you know about how welfare has been changed in the past few years?

3. How has "welfare reform" affected your life?
   — What do you have to do to meet the new welfare rules?
   — Has welfare reform affected your desire to be in school, to come to CNA? Tell me how.
   — Has welfare reform affected your ability to be in school, to come to CNA? Tell me how.
4. How do you feel about going to the Welfare Office?
   — Are you afraid to go to the Welfare Office?
   — Do you feel you are treated differently because English is not your native language? How are you treated differently? Can you give me an example?
   — What would help you to feel more confident or better to go to the Welfare Office?
5. If you didn't receive money from Welfare, could you find a job to help your family?
   — Where do you think you could find a job?
   — What might get in the way of getting the job?
   — What might help you to get this job?
6. What kind of job would you like in the future?
   — What do you need to do to prepare for that job?
   — What would help you to prepare for that job?
7. What changes would you like to see in Welfare as it is now?
   — What do you think you can do to help change welfare as it is now?
   — What do you need from other people to help change Welfare as it is now?
8. If you did not have to think about welfare changes or worry about money, what would you plans be for the next year? For the next five years?

WORKPLACE

1. What was your job in your native country?
2. Do you have a job now? If No, skip to question #8
3. Where do you work? What do you do?
   — How did you get the job?
   — What skills do you need to do this job?
   — How important is knowing English to do the job?
4. Does what you learn at CNA help you to do your job?
5. Is it easy or hard to both work and go to school?
   — If you could choose between studying and spending more time at work, what would you choose? Why?
6. Are you happy with your job? Why or why not?

7. What would your dream job be?
   — Do believe you could get this kind of job?
   — What skills would you need to do this job?
   — What could CNA do to help you prepare for this job?

Skip to Question 9

8. Are you looking for a job? If No skip to question 9
   — What kind of job would you like to have?
   — What skills would you need to get this job?
   — How important is English to getting this kind of job?
   — Does coming to CNA help you to prepare for this kind of job? How?
   — What more could CNA do to help you prepare for this kind of job?
9. If you had enough time and money to do what ever you wanted to prepare for the future what would you do?
   — What help do you need to reach this dream?

CLOSING

1. Is there anything else you want to tell me?
2. Do you have any questions for me?
3. How do you feel about doing this interview?

## *ILI Interview Guide / Phase I*
## *For those working currently*

### Learning and Achievement Questions

1. Why did you decide to join this program?
2. How does coming back to school help you get information that you need to manage your life?
3. How does coming back to school help you better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
4. How does coming back to school help you to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
5. How does coming back to school help you to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning, even after you are finished with school?
6. What kinds of support do you need in order to be able to attend school?
   To get what you need from school?

### The Changing Nature of Work

1. Are you working now? If yes, what do you do?
2. What training did you receive for the work you do now?
3. How did the training prepare you for the job you do now?
4. What do you like about your job?
5. What do you need to get a promotion? What additional skills would help?
6. How long have you been in this job?
7. Do you think the requirements to do your job have changed? If so, how?
8. Do you feel you are treated differently at work because English is not your native language?
   If so, could you please give me an example?
9. How does studying at ILI help you with your job?
10. Do you feel more confident in your job because you are taking classes at ILI?
11. How does coming back to school help you solve problems in your life? Please, give me an example.
12. Does coming back to school help you to make decisions at work? If so, give an example.
13. Does getting more education help you to better understand your job?
14. Is your job interfering with your class schedule?
15. How many different jobs have you had in the USA?
16. What have those jobs been?
17. How long did you stay in each one?

## *ILI Interview Guide / Phase I*
## *For those not currently working*

### Learning and Achievement Questions

1. Why did you decide to join this program?
2. How does coming back to school help you get information that you need to manage your life?
3. How does coming back to school help you better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
4. How does coming back to school help you to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
5. How does coming back to school help you to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning, even after you are finished with school?
6. What kinds of support do you need in order to be able to attend school?
   To get what you need from school?

### The Changing Nature of Work

1. Are you working now? If no, tell me about your last job?
2. What training did you receive to do that job?
3. How did the training help you to prepare for that job?
4. What kind of job would you like to have? "Ideal job"
5. What skills or training do you need to do this job?
6. Imagine yourself in that job ( the one you would like to have).
   - If you wanted to get a promotion, what would you need to do?
   - What additional skills would help?
7. Do you feel you are treated differently in your life because English is not your native language? If so, could you please give me an example?
8. How does studying at ILI help you with looking for the new job you mentioned?
9. How does coming back to school help you solve problems in your life? Can you give me an example?
10. How many different jobs have you had in the USA?
11. What have those jobs been?
12. How long did you stay in each one?

## *ILI Interview Guide / Second and Third Phase*

What is your native country?

How long have you been here?

What is your immigration status?

Why did you come to the U.S.?

Can you tell me some of the problems you are facing because you are not a U.S. citizen?

How are these problems affecting your life?

In what way are these problems affecting you?

How are these problems affecting your ability to attend school?

How are these problems affecting your ability to go to ILI?

What are your plans after you finish at ILI?

What kind of goal do you have as an immigrant?

What kind of support do you need in order to be here?

What have you heard about changes in laws and regulations that affect non U.S. citizens?

Do you have any personal experience with the changes?

Do you know where you can get information about changes in immigration policies?

Is your family separated because of the changes in immigration policies?

Do you think the immigrants are treated differently than the U.S. citizens?

Why do you want to be a citizen?

What kinds of support do you need to achieve your educational and personal goals?

Is the education of your country valid here?

Do you know where you can get information for services that help immigrants?

## *Mentor Program Interview Guide for Phases Two and Three*

In a typical week, how much time do you spend:

- studying or preparing for classes
- being in class
- taking care of family members
- taking care of yourself (shower, haircut, exercise, AA meetings)
- working/volunteering
- community activities (church, childrenís school events, PTA, volunteering)
- shopping
- transportation of self or family members (w/own vehicle or public transportation)
- health care (appointments etc.)
- recreation
- social service appointments (welfare, WIC, etc.)
- rest/time out for self
- other

What are your goals as:

- an individual?
- a parent?
- a worker
- a student?

Why did you come back to school?

How does coming back to school help you:

- get information you need that could help you manage your life better?
- express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
- solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
- give you what you need to learn and keep learning even after you finish school?

What kinds of support do you need in order to attend school and to get what you need from school?

What kinds of support do you contribute to your:

- family
- community
- friends
- other

When you hear the words "welfare reform" what words or pictures come to mind?

Have your educational goals changed because of welfare reform?

If so, why have they changed? How have they changed?

What changes in welfare reform have affected you most?

Are you affected by the time limit on benefits? How are you affected?

Are you affected by the work requirement (required to do work or community service) of welfare reform?

Have you ever been penalized or sanctioned for any reason by DTA? Explain.

Have you ever utilized legal services to obtain information or to appeal a decision made by the DTA? Explain.

Do you feel you have you received adequate and correct information from your welfare caseworker about your rights and responsibilities under welfare reform?

Have you ever had to go to your caseworkers or elsewhere to get information your caseworker did not or could not provide?

Do you feel that the welfare system is supporting you towards completing your goals as a student, worker, parent, and member of the community?

Have you been able to obtain adequate services and supports through DTA in:

childcare

housing

healthcare

transportation

education

What are your plans for after your welfare benefits end?

prompts: How will you support yourself? Will you stay in school? Will you have to move? Will you be working?

**Questions about Language**

What is your first language?

Do you have access to information from you welfare office in your native language?

Have you had any problems with welfare directly related to your ability to speak English?

## *Read/Write/Now Interview Guide*

### EDUCATION

1. Why did you decide to come back to school?
2. How do you like this program, Read/Write/Now?
3. Has coming back to school helped you?

   How has it helped you?

   A. Does it help you to get information you need to manage your life? If so, how?

   B. Does it help you to express your ideas and opinions? If so, how?

   C. Does it help you to better solve problems? If so, how?
4. Do you need support in order to be able to attend school or to get what you need from school? If so, can you explain?
5. Can you tell me a little bit about your education history, what other schools or programs you have attended in your life?
6. If English is not your native language, what is?

   A. Do you feel that you are treated differently because English is not your native language? If so, how?

### GOALS

7. What are your personal goals?
8. What are your career or professional goals?

### WELFARE – WHAT DO YOU THINK

9. When you hear the words "welfare reform" what words or pictures come to your mind?
10. What do you think about welfare reform? Or, what do you think about welfare?
11. Do you think that the people who make the laws know what they are doing?
12. Do you think this system is being fair and equal to everyone?
13. Who do you think is on welfare?
14. Why are people on welfare?
15. What do you think about people who are on welfare?
16. Do you think that the majority of people on public assistance are illiterate? Please explain.

**WELFARE AND YOUR LIFE**

17. Do you mind telling us if you are on welfare or getting any kind of public assistance?
    IF YES CONTINUE, IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 34.
18. Would you mind telling me what kinds of public assistance you're getting?
19. How long have you been getting those benefits?
20. What are your plans for the next year? For the next five years?
21. If you did not have to think about welfare regulations or money, what would your plans be, for the next year? The next five years?
22. What changes in the new welfare reform affect you the most? How?
23. Do the changes to welfare affect your ability to attend school? If so, how?
24. Are you surviving on the welfare money you get each month? Please explain.
25. What do you do when the money doesn't come?
26. When you get cut off, what happens, how are you going to support yourself and your family?
27. How is welfare reform affecting your goals?
28. How are you taking it?
29. Are you trying to do something about it? And about your life?
30. Why do you think Welfare wants us to do volunteer jobs?
31. Is the pay for the volunteer job less than what you would get for a regular job?
32. If you're doing a volunteer job, do you think that bosses going to take advantage of you?
33. Is the volunteer work good? Does it provide training? Does it lead to a job? What do you think?

**JOBS**

34. Do you know about the welfare volunteer job requirement?
    A. How do you feel about it?
    B. What good is a volunteer job? What do you think?
35. Do you have job?
    A. If so, where do you work?
    B. Would you like to have a different job? If so, what?
36. If you are not working now, would you like to have a job? If so, what?
37. Do you think that there are jobs available for you? If so, what are they?
38. Do you think that if you have more education (and/or job training) does that help you to get a better job? Please explain.
39. What kind of training do you think you need to get the job you want?

## *RWN Interview / Phase One / Workplace*

1. Why did you decide to come back to school, or to join Read/Write/Now?
2. How do you like this program, or Read/Write/Now?
3. How do you think that coming back to school helps you to get information that you need to manage your life?
4. Does coming back to school help you to express your ideas and opinions? If so, how?
5. Does coming back to school help you to better solve problems? If so, how?
6. How does coming back to school help you to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning, even after you are finished with this program?
7. Do you need support in order to be able to attend school or to get what you need from school? If so, can you explain?
8. Can you tell me a little bit about your education history, what other schools or programs you have attended in your life?
9. What are your personal goals?
10. What are your career or professional goals?
11. Do you have a job now? If so, where do you work?
12. What do you do on your job?
13. How do you feel about your job?
14. Do you have training or classes at your work site? If yes:
    A. please describe them.
    B. do you feel that the classes or training at your work site help you to achieve more? Why or why not?
    C. if you have training at your work site, your salary will increase? Please explain.
15. Is there drug testing in your workplace? How do you feel about drug testing in the workplace?
16. Is sexual harassment an issue at your workplace?
17. Do you experience racism in your workplace? Please describe.
18. What is the best thing about your work? The worst?
19. What kind of job would you like to have?
20. How would you get your ideal job? What would you need?
21. How do you get experience?
22. Do you think the workplace is changing? If so, how?
23. Have there been changes in your workplace? What kinds?

24. What has happened since the changes?

25. How do you think the changing workplace affects people who can't read and write?

26. After adult students learn to read and write, how does that affect the workplace? Or, how does what you learn affect what happens on the job?

27. Do you think confidence is important at the workplace? How do you get confidence?

28. What do workplaces want? (Example: Experience? Degrees? Diplomas?)

29. In what ways do you think school helps you with your job, or to get a job?

## *Read/Write/Now Interview Guide Two*

### EDUCATION

1. Why did you decide to come back to school?
2. What does this program, Read/Write/Now, mean to you?
3. Has coming back to school helped you? How?
4. Does it help you to express your ideas and opinions? If so, how?
5. Does it help you to better solve problems? If so, how?
6. Do you need support in order to stay in school? If so, can you explain?
7. If English is not your native language, what is?

    A. Do you feel that you are treated differently because English is not your native language? If so, how?

### GOALS

8. What are your goals in life – personal and professional?

### WELFARE – WHAT DO YOU THINK

9. When you hear the words "welfare reform" what words or pictures come to your mind?
10. What do you think about welfare?
11. What do you think about welfare reform?
12. Do you think that the people who make the laws know what they are doing?
13. Do you think this system is being fair and equal to everyone?
14. What do you think about people who are on welfare?
15. Do you think that most of the people who are on public assistance have problems with reading and writing?

### WELFARE AND YOUR LIFE

16. Do you mind telling us if you are on welfare or getting any kind of public assistance?

IF YES CONTINUE, IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 29.

17. Would you mind telling me what kinds of public assistance you're getting?

18. Do you mind telling me how long you have been getting those benefits?

19. What are your plans for the next year?

20. If welfare reform was not affecting you now, what would your plans be?

21. What changes in the new welfare reform affect you the most? How?

22. Do the changes to welfare affect your ability to attend school? If so, how?

23. Are you surviving on the welfare money you get each month? Please explain.

24. When you get cut off how are you going to support yourself and your family?

25. How is welfare reform affecting your goals?

26. How are you taking it?

27. Are you trying to do something about it?

28. What would help you most to meet your goals in life?

## JOBS

29. Do you have job?

    A. If so, what is your job?

    B. Do you think you are getting paid enough?

    C. Would you like to have a different job? If so, what?

30. If you are not working now, would you like to have a job? If so, what?

31. Do you think that there are jobs available for you? If so, what are they?

32. Do you think that if you have more education (and/or job training) does that help you to get a better job? Please explain.

33. What kind of training do you think you need to get the job you want?

## LAST QUESTIONS

34. How can this program help you the most?

35. If you are going to get cut off welfare, how can this program help you to stay in school?

## *Read/Write/Now Interview Guide Two*

### Tell Us About Yourself

1. How are you today?
2. Can you tell us a little about yourself?
3. What is the best thing about your life right now?
4. What is the biggest challenge in your life right now?

### Questions About School

5. How long have you been in this program?
6. Why did you decide to come back to school?
7. How do you like Read/Write/Now?
8. What do you like best about this program?
9. Is there anything you wish was different?
10. Has coming back to school helped you? How?
11. Does it help you to express your ideas and opinions?
12. Does it help you to better solve problems?
13. What helps you to stay in school? Or, What do you need in order to stay in school?

### GOALS

14. What are your goals in life?
15. What will help you to meet your goals?
16. What are your plans for next year?

### WELFARE – WHAT DO YOU THINK

17. What do you think about welfare?
18. What do you think about people who are on welfare?
19. Do you think that most of the people who are on public assistance have problems with reading and writing?
20. When you hear the words "welfare reform" what words or pictures come to your mind?

21. What do you know about welfare reform?

22. Do you think that the people who make the laws know what they are doing?

**WELFARE AND YOUR LIFE**

23. Do you mind telling us if you are on welfare or getting any kind of public assistance? What kinds?

24. Do you mind telling me how long you have been getting those benefits?

25. Are you surviving on the welfare money you get each month? Please explain.

26. How are you making ends meet?

27. If you were not receiving those benefits, how would that change your life?

28. Can you give us a picture of a day in your life? How do you spend your time?

29. Is welfare reform affecting you? How?

30. If welfare reform was not affecting you now, what would your plans be?

31. Do the changes to welfare affect your ability to come to school? If so, how?

32. How is welfare reform affecting your goals?

33. Do you think that any of the programs of Welfare Reform are helpful to you, for example:
    the 20 hour work requirement
    supported work programs
    the two-year time limit
    the Family Cap Law?

34. What do you think of these programs?

35. How do you think welfare reform is effecting your community? What changes do you see?

36. Are you trying to do something about how Welfare Reform is effecting you or others?

37. If you could talk to the people who make the laws what would you tell them?

**FAMILY**

38. Can you tell us a little bit about your family?
    - Do you have any children?
    - How old are they?
    - Do they live with you?
    - Do you have help to raise your children?

39. Is welfare reform affecting your family? Is it affecting the health of your family? How?

40. If you got cut off how would you support yourself and your family?

## SUPPORT

41. In what ways do you help yourself to meet your goals?

42. In what ways do you help your family?

43. In what ways do you feel you give support to others (friends, family, community)?

44. What supports do you have in your life?

45. What is the most important support that you have?

46. What supports do you feel you do not have now but need to have?

## JOBS

47. Can you tell us a little about your work experience?

48. If you have had a job in the past, can tell us about your experiences of trying to find and keep a job?

49. Do you have job now?

    A. If so, what is your job?

    B. Do you think you are getting paid enough?

    C. Would you like to have a different job? If so, what?

50. If you are not working now, would you like to have a job? If so, what?

51. Do you think that there are jobs available for you? If so, what are they?

52. Do you think that if you have more education (or job training) does that help you to get a better job? Please explain.

53. What kind of training do you think you need to get the job you want?

## LAST QUESTIONS

54. What can help you most to meet your goals in life?

55. How can this program help you the most?

56. If you are going to get cut off welfare, how can this program help you to stay in school?

***Read/Write/Now Interview Guide Four***
***Follow-up for People Who Have Received an Exemption Since Last Interviewed***

1. How are you today?
2. Can you tell us a little bit about how your life has changed since we last talked to you?
3. What is the biggest change in your life?
4. How has this made you feel?
5. Have there been changes for your family? If so, can you describe them?
6. What is the best thing about your life right now?
7. What is the biggest challenge in your life right now?
8. Have you been able to come back to school?
9. How has that made a difference in your life?
10. How does it feel to be back in this program?
11. Have your goals changed since the last time we talked? If so, how?
12. What is helping you most to meet your goals?
13. What are your plans for next year?
14. What do you think now when you hear the words "welfare reform"? What words or pictures come to your mind?
15. Do you think that the people who make the laws know what they are doing?
16. Do you mind telling us if you are getting any kind of public assistance now?
17. Would you mind telling me what kinds of public assistance youire getting?
18. Do you mind telling me how long you have been getting those benefits?
19. Are you surviving on the money you get each month? Please explain.
20. How are you making ends meet?
21. If you were not receiving those benefits, how would that change your life?
22. Can you give us a picture of a day in your life? How do you spend your time?
23. Do you think that any of the programs of Welfare Reform were helpful to you, for example:
    - the 20 hour work requirement
    - supported work programs
    - the two-year time limit
    - the Family Cap Law?

24. What do you think of these programs in general?

25. How do you think Welfare Reform is affecting your community? What changes do you see?

26. Are you trying to do something about how Welfare Reform is affecting you or others?

27. If you could talk to the people who make the laws what would you tell them?

28. In what ways do you help yourself to meet your goals?

29. In what ways do you help your family?

30. In what ways do you feel you give support to others (friends, family, community)?

31. What supports do you have in your life?

32. What is the most important support that you have?

33. What supports do you not have now but feel you need?

34. Can you tell us a little about your work experience?

35. If you have had a job in the past, can tell us about your experiences of trying to find and keep a job?

36. Would you like to have a job? If so, what?

37. Do you think that there are jobs available for you? If so, what are they?

38. What kind of education and training do you think you need to get the job you want?

39. What can help you most to meet your goals in life?

40. How can this program help you the most?

**Interview Guide**

Introduce yourself and ask the person you're interviewing to tell you their name and any identifying information they'd like to share. After reviewing the consent form and getting permission for the interview, give any additional background on the project, the committee, and your participation that may be desired by the person you're interviewing. Use the Interview Worksheet to record basic information, make notes during the interview, and identify any questions you'd like to come back to. Refer to the interviewing techniques handout (orange sheet) if needed.

Before starting the interview, make sure to ask (and record) the basics. Something like this:

Today is _____, and my name is _____ and I'll be conducting this interview.

What's your name?

Where do you work at UMass and what's your position?

**Personal Experience in the Workplace Questions**

1. What has your experience as a UMass worker been like?
2. Do you have the information, education, and skills needed to do your job?
3. What skills are needed to do your job?
4. Are people treated differently in your department or area based on the kind of work they do? If so, how?
5. Do you feel that you are treated differently based on the kind of work you do? If so, how? If so, does that affect your morale or what it is like to do your job?
6. What's the best thing about your work? What's the worst?

**Changing Workplace Questions**

1. Do you think the workplace is changing? In what ways?
2. Do you see changes happening in the workplace at your job? ...in your department? ...at the university?
3. Are there any specific changes that have affected you? How?

4. These are some examples of changing workplace issues that other UMass workers have noted: technological changes, up-skilling of some jobs without an increase in grade level, loss of some duties to professional staff, uncertainty about what skills or training will be needed for jobs in the future, privatization, inadequate access to computers. Do any of these issues affect you?
5. What are some of the issues at your work site?

### Education and Training Questions

1. Do you feel that have the skills, experience and education needed to get promoted? If not, what kinds of skills or training or other experience would you need?
2. What do you need to be successful in the workplace?
3. Does your job have the potential for career growth?
4. Have you gotten release time from your job for the training and education you would like?
5. Have you taken university courses while working here? Do you want to?
6. What would your ideal job be?
7. How would you get your "ideal" job? What would you need? Would you need any training or education for a different job that you'd like to do?

### Learning and Achievement Questions

1. Why did you decide to participate in educational programs while working at the university (for example, union trainings, workplace education, staff training, or university classes)?
2. How does being involved in an education program as a UMass worker help you get information that you need to manage your life?
3. How does being involved in an education program as a UMass worker help you to better express your ideas and opinions in ways that you feel are effective?
4. How does being involved in an education program as a UMass worker help you to better solve problems that you face and make decisions about things that are important to you?
5. How does being involved in an education program as a UMass worker help you to understand what you need in order to learn and keep learning?
6. What kinds of support do you need in order to participate in educational programs while you're a UMass worker?

*Center for New Americans / Citizenship Focus Group*

**AGENDA**

1. People Arrive
    - Greet people at door.
    - Have them put on name tags.
    - They can have a snack or drink while we are waiting for everyone to arrive.
2. Welcome
    - Bussarakum (and\or Susan) welcome people to the evening's discussion.
3. Description of Changes Project and Purpose of Group Discussion
    - Carolyn reviews information from the invitation mailing about The Changes Project and the purpose of tonight's discussion.
    - Introduce the idea of the permission form and pass out copies. We'll sign and collect them later.
    - We want to hear about everyone's experiences. Some people may have very different experiences or ideas about the citizenship process. That's OK. We want to hear about the whole range of experience and ideas. We will tape the conversation so we can remember what people say. Susan is also going to take notes to help us remember.
    - Let's begin!
4. Questions and Discussion
    - Opening Question: What is your name? What country did you come from? When did you come to the United States?
    - Start Up Question: Why did you decide to become a citizen?
    - Key Questions: Has the process of becoming a citizen been easy or hard for you?
        - — What obstacles have you encountered?
        - — What help and education do you need?
        - — What advice do you have for people just starting the citizenship process?
    - Final \ Wrap Up Question: What advice do you have for the INS to do a better job of helping people become citizens?

      [If time: How do you feel about being an immigrant in the US? Do you feel immigrants are treated the same as people born in this country?]
5. Thank You for Coming
6. Collect Permission Forms and Give Out Certificates

## *The Center for New Americans / Focus Group with the Communications Group*

Purpose: To find out about your experiences and needs as immigrants. To know more about the many things that have affected your life since coming to the United States.

We are doing this research to help educational institutions — like Center for New Americans, U.S. Department of Education, and schools across the country — know how to better serve adult learners.

**Focus Group Questions**

Opening Question

When did you come to the United States?

Introduction\Transition Question

What is it like to be an immigrant in the United States?

- Are immigrants treated differently from citizens? How so? Can you give an example?

Key Questions

Immigration

- Have you heard about the changes in immigration policy?
- What changes have been made?
- How do you feel about the changes?

Workplace

- What makes it hard to get a job as an immigrant?
- What requirements do you need to meet to get a job in the US?

Learning

- What do you need to learn about as an immigrant to survive in the US
- What skills do you need to learn as a worker?
- What do you need to learn to be a member of the community?
- What do you need to learn to raise children in the US?

(Review List of What Needs to be Learned)

- What support \ help do you need to be able to learn these things?

Closing

- If you had enough time and money and no immigration problems what would you want for your future?

## *The Center for New Americans / Northampton Focus Group Questions*

Opening Questions

What is your name?

What country do you come from?

Why do you study computers?

Beliefs about Importance of Computers

How does knowing the computer help people to meet their goals in life?

- How important is knowing computers for getting a job?
- Where do you use what you've learned about computers outside of CNA's computer lab?

Obstacles and Supports

What kinds of problems do you have to come to class / study computer?

- Are there any special challenges non-native speakers face when they are learning computers?

If there were no program like CNA's computer lab, what would you do to learn computer?

What helps / motivates you to come to class?

Wrap Up Question for a Final Go Around

In 5 years (2004) how do you think computers will affect / will impact your life?

## *ILI Focus Group / Phase One / Changing Workplace*

The focus group began with introductions:

Who are you?

What country are you from?

How long have you been in the US?

ILI created a handout that had three circles on it. Focus group participants each got a sheet and were asked to write about their past job (name of that job/type of job, skills needed and requirements needed for that job) in the first circle. In the second circle they were to do the same for their current job. The third circle was for them to project what their future job would be and what skills and requirements it would have.

Subsequently, they discussed what they had written.

## *ILI Focus Group / Story and Questions*

ILI used this story in their focus groups. Subsequent to reading and hearing the story, they asked the questions that follow the story.

**The Story of an Immigrant in the USA**

Andrea came to this country 3 years ago. She wanted to study English and get a Master's degree. She also wanted to be with her husband who is a legal resident of the US. She came from Peru as a tourist and was planning to change her status to become a resident.

After getting pregnant with her first baby, she was not able to leave the country because if she did she would not be able to return. This meant she would have to give birth to her baby away from her husband. So she stayed in the USA, and her tourist visa expired.

When Andrea went to the Immigration Office to present the application to adjust her status, she found out that she was not eligible because her husband was not a citizen.

In order for her to change her status, her husband needed to become a citizen. The process of becoming a citizen is taking from 1 to 3 years.

Her main reason for changing her visa status was to be able to get a social security number so she could work and study. Because she was not able to change her status, she can't work, go to school or travel until her husband becomes a citizen. She had to decide between going back to her country or staying here with her husband and son.

It has been a year and Andrea still can't work, can't study and can't go to her country to visit with her family. She can't even get a driver's license. She can't get health insurance either.

Her biggest frustration is that she hasn't been able to start her process of becoming a resident. Her only choice is to "wait".

Even though she has learned a lot in this country and she doesn't regret the fact that she decided to stay here to be with her husband and her son; she still hates the fact that immigration takes so long.

**Questions:**

What expectation did Andrea have when she came to the United States?
When did you come to the US?
What were your experiences?
Do you have any educational goals like Andrea?
What problems has Andrea had?
What problems have you faced?
What support and help did Andrea get?
What support have you gotten?

## *ILI Focus Group*

The ILI research team provided this article to the teachers of classes that they were going to do a focus group with. Students read the article and wrote about their own experiences prior to the focus group.

### In New York's Flatbush, It is Immigration Central

By Maria Puente, USA Today

On Church Avenue in Flatbush, a young Jewish mother and her two small children make their way down the street, past the Korean grocer, past the 300-year-old Dutch graveyard, past the Caribbean restaurant where spicy fragrances mingle with the traffic's exhaust fumes.

Thirty years ago the mother and her yarmulke-clad sons would not have stood out. Today, they are conspicuous in a crowd of African, Caribbean and Asian faces – the latest immigrants to arrive in one of the USA's most diverse communities.

"I used to have more native New Yorkers come in, but now I have more foreign clients", says Shirley Walker, a beauty salon owner who immigrated from Jamaica by way of London. Just call this part of Brooklyn the "United Nations ZIP Code".

USA Today analysis of data on 2.2 million people who became legal immigrants in 1991-1993 shows that Flatbush ZIP code 11226 has more immigrants from more countries than just about any other community in the USA. An average of 2,454 legal immigrants per year from 78 different countries moved to the ZIP code in 1991-93, the data show. It is likely that hundreds of illegal immigrants trickled in as well. As Congress mulls major changes in the nation's legal immigration system, the 115,000 residents of 11226 show how the current system changed the country. Nearly two-thirds of immigrants are admitted because of a close relationship to a citizen or legal permanent resident; they in turn can bring in other relatives. It is this "chain migration" that is the key to proposals before Congress to limit family-based immigration.

"Everything changed" says bookkeeper Rita Bellock, who moved out of Flatbush 11226 when immigrants and welfare families moved in. "Everyone is Arab or Indian or Pakistani. In some ways, it makes me feel uncomfortable".

Sandy Tishcoff, who lives in 11226 and owned a bookstore there since 1977, says he can gauge the economic vitality within a few blocks of his store: There's the new Pakistani bakery; Natasha Pizza, owned by Russian immigrants, is opening soon; Los Mariachis Mexican restaurant has just expanded.

"The melting pot is still with us" says Tishcoff whose store carries five kinds of New Year's cards – Jewish, secular, Russian Orthodox, Chinese and Tibetan. "It just has a different slant and taste."

***Mentor Program***
***Focus Group #1***

Focus Group Questions:

1. If you were face to face with the Governor of Massachusetts, what would you say to him about how the time limit has affected your ability to complete your education?
2. What would be the one change in the time limit that you would request?

***Mentor Program***
***Focus Group #2 (and #3)***

(These are notes from the transcript of the focus group, during which facilitators are describing the exercise of filling in a "brick wall template" as a way of discussing the theme of support. Our third focus group, with a group of teen mothers in a GED program, was similar to the second one described here.)

Facilitators: Cynthia McBride, Krystal Recor, Alicia Robert

| Top Row of Bricks: Supports (received) that make life easier but are not essential for survival | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | |

Supports contributed

| Second Row of Bricks: Supports (received) that a person needs in order to stay in school | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | |

Supports contributed

| First (foundation) Row of Bricks: Supports (received) that a person needs in order to stay alive | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | |

Supports contributed

Krystal:

What we plan to do is each brick , we're going to have a brick wall built. This is the bottom, which is the foundation. Each brick represents a basic need, things that you cannot live without. O.K. and then next [the second row of bricks from the bottom], these are things that you need but can do without, but I do not necessarily mean that we have to agree. For example, Housing: you've got to have a place to live, you have to have food and go shopping. This row of bricks is the row that's just above the bottom which is also very, very important. So the next important thing, things that would make it difficult to live without. What we're going to do is write what the needs are inside of the bricks and then in the cement part, the binding, the mortar we're going to write in the, what is it Cynthia?

Cynthia:

The bricks are supports we are getting and in between is the mortar - - what we are contributing.

## *UM/LMWEP SPACE groups*

Introductions

How do you think the workplace is changing?
In general? At UM/Amherst?

What do you think work will be like in 2002?

Do you have the skills and education you need to do your job?

Are there other skills and/or education you would like?

***Read/Write/Now / Phase One***
***Focus Group Questions***

1. What do you think of when you hear the words "Welfare Reform?"
2. How is Welfare Reform affecting your goals?
3. Are there other ways that Welfare Reform is affecting your life?
4. How is Welfare Reform affecting your ability to come to school?
5. What are your reasons for joining this program?
6. What can this program do to help you meet your goals?
7. Are there ways that this program can change, now that Welfare Reform is here, to help you to do what you want to do?
8. What changes would you make if you were in charge of the welfare system?

***Read / Write / Now***
***Focus Group Questions — phase two, December 2, 1998***

Note: Introductions are before the questions.

1. How long have you been in this program?
2. Are you still in this program?
3. Why did you decide to join this program?

1. Who here is receiving public assistance of any kind, or has been recently?
2. What kind of public assistance are you receiving?
3. How does welfare reform affect you?
4. What are your goals in life?
5. How does welfare reform affect your ability to reach your goals and dreams?
6. How does welfare reform affect your ability to come to school?
7. Are there ways that this program could change, now that Welfare Reform is here, to help you stay in school or do what you want to do?
8. What kind of support do you need in order to stay in school?
9. If you were in charge of the welfare system, what changes would you make?
10. Provide a short summary of the conversation and then ask, is there anything you think is missing? And/or Is there something you would like to say that you didn't have a chance to say?
11. What was the one most important part of this discussion to you?
12. If you could pick one thing that would help you most in life to do what you want to do, what would it be?

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Today's Date: _____

1. Your school _____
2. Your age _____
3. Check one: male ☐ female ☐
4. Check one: married ☐ single ☐
5. How many children do you have? _____
6. What are the ages of your children? _____
7. What is your native language? _____
8. Do you speak English? yes ☐ no ☐
9. What is your race/ethnicity? _____
10. Where were you born? _____
11. Are you a U.S. citizen? yes ☐ no ☐

## INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL

12. What are the reasons you are in school? Check all that apply.

__ learn English
__ get a GED
__ required to be in school to keep welfare benefits
__ prepare for college
__ prepare for a job
__ get a better job
__ get into a job training program

__ get an associate's degree
__ get a bachelors' degree
__ be a role model for your children
__ help your children with schoolwork
__ become more independent
__ improve self-confidence
other _____
_____

13. What is the most important reason you are in school?

14. What are your long term goals?

15. What are the supports <u>you have</u> that help you stay in school? Check all that apply.

- __ day care
- __ transportation
- __ food stamps
- __ welfare check
- __ SSI
- __ legal services
- __ financial aid from school
- __ health care
- __ housing subsidy
- __ ESL classes
- __ support from teachers
- __ support from friends
- __ support from other students

- __ enough time to complete goals
- __ school counseling
- __ personal counseling
- __ career counseling
- __ information about welfare
- __ information about school
- __ emotional support from others
- __ hope for the future
- __ inner strength
- __ spiritual faith
- __ support from religious organization
- __ improve self-confidence

other _____

16. What would help you stay in school that you <u>do not have</u>? Check all that apply.

- __ day care
- __ transportation
- __ food stamps
- __ welfare check
- __ SSI
- __ legal services
- __ financial aid from school
- __ health care
- __ housing subsidy
- __ ESL classes
- __ support from teachers
- __ support from friends
- __ support from other students

- __ enough time to complete goals
- __ school counseling
- __ personal counseling
- __ career counseling
- __ information about welfare
- __ information about school
- __ emotional support from others
- __ hope for the future
- __ inner strength
- __ spiritual faith
- __ support from religious organization
- __ improve self-confidence

other _____

17. Who helps you to stay in school? Check all that apply.

- __ family
- __ friends
- __ other students
- __ teachers
- __ counselors
- __ The Mentor Program

- __ welfare caseworker
- __ legal services representative
- __ social services workers
- __ church oir religious orginization

other _____

18. What helps you the most to keep working towards your goals?

19. What have you had to give up in order to stay in school?

20. What causes you the most stress in your daily life? Check all that apply.

- __ paying my bills
- __ not knowing about the future
- __ not having enough money
- __ thinking about my welfare benefits running out
- __ getting my school work done
- __ thinking about my children's future
- __ thinking about my children's health
- __ thinking about my children's safety
- __ thinking about my children's schoolwork
- __ my physical health
- __ my mental health
- __ my safety
- __ completing my education
- __ speaking English
- __ going to welfare appointments
- __ too much paperwork
- __ finding the information I need
- __ finding the help I need
- __ difficulty reading and writing
- __ my housing situation
- __ finding good health care
- __ finding good day care
- __ needing transportation

other _____

## INFORMATION ABOUT WELFARE

21. Are you on welfare now? yyes ☐ no ☐

22. If you are on welfare now, how much time do you have left before your benefits end? _____

23. Have you recently lost your welfare benefits? yes ☐ no ☐

24. What were the reasons your benefits ended?

25. Are you currently doing the 20-hours work requirement for welfare? yyes ☐ no ☐

26. If yes, has the work requirement affected your ability to complete your education? yes ☐ no ☐

27. In what ways has it affected you?

28. Are you affected by the two-year time limit? yes ☐ no ☐

29. Have you tried to get an extension of your benefits? yes ☐ no ☐

30. If yes, did you get the extension? yes ☐ no ☐ 31.

If no, why was the extension denied? _____

_____

32. Have you tried to get an exemption from the 2-year time limit? yes ☐ no ☐

33. If yes, did you get the exemption? yes ☐ no ☐

34. If no, why was the exemption denied? _____

_____

35. Have you tried to get an exemption from the work requirement? yes ☐ no ☐

36. If yes, did you get the exemption? yes ☐ no ☐

37. If no, why was the exemption denied? _____

_____

38. Has welfare helped you to meet your educational goals? yes ☐ no ☐

39. If yes, how has welfare helped you?

40. How can welfare do a better job of helping you to meet your educational goals?

41. Has welfare reform changed your educational goals? yes ☐ no ☐

42. If yes, how has it changed your goals?

218

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Date: _____

1. School Name: Read/Write/Now
2. Age _____
3. Check One: Male ___ Female ___
4. Check One: Married ___ Single ___
5. Number of children _____ _____
6. What are the ages of your children? _____.

   _____
7. What is your native language? _____

   _____
8. Do you speak English? Yes ___ No ___
9. What is your race/ethnicity? _____

   _____
10. Where were you born? _____

    _____
11. What is your nationality? _____

    _____

## INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL

12. What are the reasons you are in school? **Check all that apply.**

__ to learn English
__ to learn how to read and write better
__ to get a GED
__ to get into college
__ to prepare for a job
__ to get a better job
__ to get into a job training program
__ to be a role model for your children
__ to help your children with schoolwork
__ to feel better about yourself
__ to be more independent
other _____

_____

12. What is the most important reason you are in school?

14. What are your long term goals?

15. What are the supports you HAVE that help you stay in school? **Check all that apply**

_____ day care
_____ transportation
_____ food stamps
_____ welfare check
_____ SSI
_____ legal services
_____ health care
_____ information about welfare
_____ housing subsidy
_____ having a job
_____ support from teachers
_____ support from family
_____ support from friends
_____ enough time to complete goals
_____ counseling
_____ emotional support from others
_____ hope for the future
_____ inner strength
_____ spiritual faith
_____ support form religious organizations
other _____
_____

16. What would help you stay in school that you do NOT HAVE? **Check all that apply**

_____ day care
_____ transportation
_____ food stamps
_____ welfare check
_____ SSI
_____ legal services
_____ health care
_____ information about welfare
_____ housing subsidy
_____ having a job
_____ support from teachers
_____ support from family
_____ support from friends
_____ enough time to complete goals
_____ counseling
_____ emotional support from others
_____ hope for the future
_____ inner strength
_____ spiritual faith
_____ support form religious organizations
other _____
_____

17. Who helps you to stay in school? **Check all that apply**

_____ family
_____ friends
_____ counselors
_____ teachers
_____ welfare caseworkers
_____ legal services representatives
_____ social service workers
_____ church or religious organization
_____ myself
other _____
_____

18. Who helps you the most to keep working towards your goals?

_____
_____
_____

19. What have you had to give up in order to stay in school?

_____
_____

220

20. What causes you the most stress in your daily life? **Check all that apply**

_____ finding a job
_____ paying my bills
_____ not knowing about the future
_____ thinking about my welfare benefits running out
_____ getting my school work done
_____ thinking about my children's future
_____ thinking about my children's health
_____ thinking about my children's safety
_____ thinking about my children's schoolwork
_____ my physical health
_____ my mental health
_____ my safety
_____ completing my education
_____ going to welfare appointments
_____ speaking English
_____ filling out paperwork
_____ finding the information I need
_____ finding the help I need
_____ difficulty reading and writing
_____ my housing situation
_____ finding good health care
_____ needing transportation
other _____

A. What helps you most to stay in school?

_____

_____

B. What would keep you from coming to school?

_____

_____

C. What are the most important ways Read/Write/Now helps you? **Check all that apply**

_____ helps me with reading
_____ helps me with writing
_____ helps me with math
_____ helps me with computers
_____ helps me get a GED
_____ helps me learn English
_____ has classes at different times of day
_____ helps with transportation
_____ helps me get information I need to manage my life
_____ helps me get information about jobs
_____ helps me prepare for a job or a better job and/or training programs
_____ challenges me to do my best
_____ teachers are supportive
_____ classmates are supportive
_____ helps me feel more independent
_____ helps me feel less alone
other _____

D. How can your school do a better job helping you to meet your goals?

_____

_____

## INFORMATION ABOUT WELFARE

21. Are you on welfare now? check one: yes ____ no ____
22. If you are on welfare now, how much time do you have left before your benefits end? _____

23. Were you on welfare in the past? check one: yes ____ no ____
24. What is the reason your benefits ended? _____

25. Are you currently doing the 20-hr work requirement for welfare? check one: yes ____ no ____
    26. If yes, has the work requirement affected your ability to complete your education? check one: yes ____ no ____
    27. In what ways has it affected you? _____

28. Are you affected by the two-year limit? check one: yes ____ no ____
    29. Have you tried to get an extension of your benefits? check one: yes ____ no ____
        30. If yes, did you get the extension? check one: yes ____ no ____
        31. If no, why was the extension denied? _____
    32. Have you tried to get an exemption from the 2-year time limit? check one: yes ____ no ____
        33. If yes, did you get the exemption? check one: yes ____ no ____
        34. If no, why was the exemption denied? _____
    35. Have you tried to get an exemption from the work requirement? check one: yes ____ no ____
        36. If yes, did you get the exemption? check one: yes ____ no ____
        37. If no, why was the exemption denied? _____

38. Have you ever been sanctioned by Welfare? check one: yes ____ no ____
    39. If yes, what were the reasons for the sanction? _____

40. Has welfare helped you to meet your educational goals? check one: yes ____ no ____
    41. If yes, how has welfare helped you? _____

42. How can the welfare system do a better job helping you to meet your educational goals? _____

43. Has welfare reform changed your educational goals? check one: yes ____ no ____
    44. If yes, how has it changed your goals? _____

**I am...**

I am a... man woman

I come from _____ .

I came to the United States in ____ .

I am a... citizen not a citizen

I am ____ years old.

I live with...

____ my husband.

____ my wife.

____ my children. They are _____ years old.

____ other family members.

____ friends.

**Work...**

Do you have a job now? Yes No

I work... Full time (more than 30 hours) Part time (less than 30 hours)

I am a _____ .

I my home country I was a _____ .

**I study English because...**

____ I need it for a job.

____ I want to help my children with schoolwork.

____ I want to be a citizen.

____ I want to say what I think.

____ I want to go to college.

**I can not come to class sometimes because...**

____ I have to work.

____ I have to take care of children.

____ I am sick.

____ Transportation is a problem.

**I want to come to class because...**

____ The teachers help me.

____ I learn about United States customs.

____ I learn about United States laws.

____ I learn about getting a job.

____ People are friendly.

**My dreams are...**

____ To own a house.

____ To own a business.

____ For me to get a good education.

____ For my children to get a good education.

## Living in the United States

What is your goal for living in the United States?

____ I want to be a citizen.
____ I want to be able to vote.
____ I want to renew my visa.
____ I want to go home.
____ I want to get a green card.
____ I want to bring family members to join me in the United States.

Do you have any other goals for living in the United States?

Do you have any problems to get your goals? ___ Yes ___ No
Describe any problems you have had.

Do you get information or help at school to get your goals? ___ Yes ___ No
Describe any ways school helps you with this goal.

Are there other ways school could help you with your goals?

## Help

During your first six months in the United States what kind of help did you need?

____ Someone to translate for me.
____ Money from the Untied States government.
____ Money from a church or religious organization.
____ Money from family or friends.
____ A school to learn English.
____ Someone to help me find a job.

Did you need any other kinds of help during your first six months in the U.S.?

What help do you need now (in the summer of 1999)?

____ Someone to translate for me.
____ Money from the Untied States government.
____ Money from a church or religious organization.
____ Money from family or friends.
____ A school to learn English.
____ Someone to help me find a job.

Do you need any other kinds of help now?

What can you do by yourself now?

____ I speak English outside of the class.
____ I help people who speak less English than I do.
____ I make money.
____ I talk to my doctor.
____ I talk to my children's teacher.
____ I talk to my neighbors.
____ I go to the supermarket.

Are there other things you can do by yourself now?

**Work**

What are your work goals?

____ I want to keep the job I have.
____ I want a job that pays more money than the job I have now.
____ I want a job with more hours than the job I have now.
____ I want a job with fewer hours than the job I have now.
____ I want to get my first job in the United States.
____ I want to get a job like the job I had in my native country.
____ I want to stay home to take care of my children.

Do you have any other work goals?

Does going to school help you with your work goals? ___ Yes ___ No
Describe any ways school helps you with your work goals.

What problems do you have working (or trying to work) in the United States?

____ I can not get a job because my English is not good enough.
____ I can not get a better job because my English is not good enough.
____ I have no work visa.
____ My boss treats me differently because English is not my native language.
____ The education from my home country is not recognized in the U.S.
____ am not paid enough to meet my family's needs.
____ It is hard to go to school because I have to work a lot.

Do you have any other work problems?

In what ways could school help you to learn more about working or getting a job in the U.S.?

Directions: This isn't a test – just a survey. Please do not put your name on this survey. We do not want to know your name. But please check the box beside each question that matches what you feel.
[Formatting has been altered.]

**I. Tell us about your job.**

Compared to two years ago:

1) I have ____ work to do.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ much less

2) I am expected to exercise ____ independent judgement.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ much less

3) I am expected to work at a skill level ____ my pay grade.
☐ far above ☐ above ☐ equal to ☐ below ☐ far below

4) I am ____ expected to cover for unfilled vacancies.
☐ always ☐ often ☐ sometimes ☐ seldom ☐ never

5) I am working with computers ____.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount ☐ less ☐ not at all

6) I feel ____ stress on the job.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ no

7) I am expected to do ____ different types of duties at work.
☐ a lot more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ no

8) There is ____ paperwork and documentation of how my work time is spent.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ no

**II. Tell us about your workplace.**

Compared to two years ago:

9) My department has ____ work to do.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ much less

10) My department has ____ people to do the work.
☐ far more ☐ more ☐ the same number of ☐ less ☐ far less

11) My department contracts out ____ work.
☐ much more ☐ more ☐ the same amount of ☐ less ☐ no

12) There are ____ temporary workers in my department.
☐ far more ☐ more ☐ the same number of ☐ less ☐ no

13) Morale in my department is ____.
☐ much higher ☐ higher ☐ the same ☐ lower ☐ much lower

14) I am working with ____ people of different cultural and racial backgrounds.
☐ far more ☐ more ☐ the same number of ☐ less ☐ no

**III. Tell us about work-related courses, skills or workshops.**

Compared to two years ago:

15) It's easier for me to get release time to take work-related courses or workshops.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

16) It's harder for me to take university classes.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

17) I find I'm too stressed to take courses or workshops.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

18) My co-workers are more reluctant to cover for me while I'm taking a class.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

19) I have a better sense of how my job skills may have to change for work in the future.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

20) My supervisor is encouraging of my educational efforts.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

21) I have more opportunities for career and job advancement.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

22) I feel that it's important to keep continuing my education as a lifelong learner.
☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

**IV. Tell us about yourself.**

23) I am in the:
☐ AFSCME unit ☐ USA/MTA unit ☐ Non-unit

24) I am:
☐ Female ☐ Male

25) My pay grade level is:
Grade _____

26) I have worked at UMass for:

_____ years

27) In general, my job duties are:

☐ clerical ☐ food service ☐ janitorial ☐ technical ☐ trades

☐ other _____

28) Please check all that you have taken:

☐ workplace education courses ☐ college courses ☐ graduate courses ☐ OIT classes

☐ employee training workshops ☐ noncredit continuing education courses

**V. Tell us about your experiences in the workplace.**

29) In my department, faculty and professionals are treated with more respect than classified workers.

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

30) In my department, there is a dress code that is different for classified workers than for professional staff or faculty.

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ doesn t apply ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

31) In my department, I think that workers are sometimes denied upgrades or promotions because of their economic class.

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ don't know ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

32) My wages have kept pace with my job responsibilities.

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ don't know ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

33) I feel that I'm affected by classism at the workplace.

☐ strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ don't know ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Classism can be defined as behavior and attitudes based on the type of work people do, the education they have, or how much money they earn now or grew up with. If you feel that classism exists, please tell us in detail how classism affects or doesn't affect you.

If you see classism around you (in your department or on campus), could you give some examples?

If you have noticed classism at UMass, have you noticed any changes in the past two years in how classism operates? Detailed answers are appreciated.

Thank You! Please direct any questions you may have about this survey to Leslie Fraser and the Classism and Changing Workplace Committee, Labor/Management Workplace Education Program, 506 Goodell, 545-2031.

228

# Appendix Four: Mother's Day Letter

**WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US?**

Writings about Welfare Reform and its Impact on Students in Western Massachusetts

We are students and staff from Holyoke Community College and The Care Center, a GED program for pregnant and parenting teens in Holyoke, Massachusetts. This collection of quotes and poem which follows it were generated in our writing workshop this spring. We have been meeting every week to write about welfare reform and its effects on us and our families. Our workshop is part of *The Changes Project*, a regional research collaborative looking at the impact of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace on adult students in Western Massachusetts.

Our group consists of teen parents, GED and college students, teachers, current and former welfare recipients and advocated for low-income people. All of us are mothers and students. We are very worried about the effects that welfare reform, particularly the two-year time limit on benefits, will have on students in Massachusetts and their ability to provide for their families, to complete their educations, and to prepare for meaningful and productive work. As Mothers' Day approaches, we are thinking a lot about what is going to happen when the safety net that welfare provides for low-income families no longer exists. We hope that you will think about this too, as you read our words. The following quotes were contributed by each of the members of our group:

*I get real stressed thinking about welfare reform. I know welfare is no longer going to be around. I don't want to be on welfare all my life. I want to get a job to support my daughter.*

*I have two children and I live in a shelter doing the best I can to give my children the best future I can. Welfare is trying to make me run through the GED as if it were easy. It's not. The work is very hard and it takes time for you to really study it enough to take the test.*

*Welfare reform should have a longer time limit. People who are in college should have an opportunity to make it and later on they will pay back what was given to them. What I need to succeed is moral support from the government and from my family, saying I can make it, not saying "She's on welfare, what a dead-beat." I need time and I need help.*

*I am a 35-year old single parent who has returned to school so that I can get the education I need to get a good paying job with benefits. I have struggled as a single parent, community volunteer, and community college student. However, welfare reform has not acknowledged my struggles, but has added to them. I have been accepted to two very reputable four-year colleges for next fall. But, like thousands of mothers in Massachusetts, I will be cut off welfare December 1, 1998, two months before I receive my associates' degree. I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I am determined to complete my education, because I have worked too hard to stop now.*

*My experience as a teen parent is that it's hard, but I know I can do it. I realize life is too precious for me to give up. I don't think I should be put down as a single parent and a welfare recipient. I know I am going to make it, if not for me, then for my son. Welfare should help me to reach my goals.*

*Welfare is affecting people who are trying to better their education. I believe that if the government sees there are people struggling to better themselves, they should help them. Welfare reform should encourage people, not intimidate them.*

*I need more time to finish college, to get my B.A. I spent over two years studying ESL at Holyoke Community College and then I got an associates' degree. I have been accepted to transfer to a four-year college, but my welfare benefits will be cut off in a few months and I will not be able to finish my education. I know that I need more education in order to get a good job so I can support my two daughters.*

*I started as a street girl. When I got pregnant I thought to myself that I need to do something so I don't have to live on welfare. But that's what came first, so now I'm receiving welfare and I'm attending school so I can give my son something, an education. But when you walk into a welfare office you are seen as an uneducated person, especially if you're Hispanic. I need power, the power that could take me to a place I've never seen before, to become someone and to have what I don't have now.*

*I have worked with teen parents for eight years. I am constantly amazed at their tenacity, their ability, and their desire to succeed. These young women have a very difficult struggle on their hands. Many of them are truly on their own. They work hard in their classes, help each other out, and do what they think is best for their children. Taking away their financial, educational and social support will not help them to reach their full potential or to provide and care for their children. These young women and their children have futures – what kind of future do we want for them?*

*I think welfare should be able to help people when they need it. If they can't find a job, they need welfare to help them get on their feet for a little while, to get their GED or go to college and get a degree so they can find a good job.*

*As a GED student and a young parent, I think it will be very hard for me to be ready to have a good job within two years. A lot of us aren't prepared to go out and get a job that will support our families. A lot of us know what we want in life and we're trying our hardest to make it, but right now the time limit on welfare benefits is truly making it hard for us to do this.*

*I feel that welfare reform is making lots of women with children change our minds about what we want for our futures. The time limit is forcing us to do things we don't want to do, to give up our goals. We need support. We need to hear that welfare will stand by us so we can move on with our lives.*

*As a former welfare recipient during a more humane era, I was able to get a B.A. and to prepare for a career as an educator without having to worry about a time limit or to have my access to education restricted. Today I am a graduate student and I work as an advocate for low-income women. The current welfare policies have already made it impossible for many recipients to continue their education, and I fear that "ending welfare as we know it" will have devastating consequences for individual families and for our economy as a whole.*

*Written by:*
Sharon Antuna, Jessica Solivan, Angelica Cruz, Lissette Torres, Celia Arbuckle: *The Care Center*
Ann Scott, Betty Falcon, Rhonda Soto: *Holyoke Community College*

**My Struggle, the Time Limit, My Future and My Love for My Child**

My struggle is like trying to roll a wheel up a hill.
The wheel is like a cycle I want to break out of.
The wheel is a force I want to push out of the way, but I can't.
The wheel is like a wall.
The wheel is broken and it's hard to roll.
The wheel is old and I'm tired of pushing it.

The welfare time limit is like a battery.
The battery is going strong now, but it's going to slow down.
It's just for a little while.
Life is like a battery too – it just keeps going and going
and then when your time's up, you just die.
I hope there's enough time for me.
I hope it's a rechargeable battery.
Is there any way I can buy a new battery?

My future is never-ending, forever-lasting.
I know my future dreams are going to come.
I'm going to get everything I want.
I'm going to have it all, and I'm going to treasure it all.

My future is never-ending, forever-lasting, like my love for my child,
My love for my child is like the world –
it's a huge round circle of love.
My love for my unborn child is like an ocean –
it's a huge and everlasting love and my child floats in it.
My love for my child is like eternity –
it will go on forever and it has always been here.
I love my child with all my heart.

Written by participants in the Care Center Writers' Group, as part of *The Changes Project*

*For more information about The Changes Project and the work we are doing with students in Western Massachusetts, contact:*
*Ann Scott, Mentor Program, Rm A260, Holyoke Community College*
*303 Homestead Ave. Holyoke MA 01040, (413) 552-2524, ascott@educ.umass.edu*

# Appendix Five: Theater Pieces

**Changes Project Stop Action Theater**

**"It's not my fault"**
**Theme: Workplace Issues**

Characters:

Sam . . . . . Custodian
Max . . . . . Sam's partner
Sue. . . . . Head custodian
Ron . . . . . Supervisor

Scene 1: Max and Sam in Max's apartment

Max: Hi, Sam

Sam: Hi Max! I want to take classes and the classes are for the benefits of the employees.

Max: You should apply, it's a good opportunity for you.

Sam: I want to go, I have to go.

Max: Talk to your supervisor.

Scene 2: Workplace

Sam: Hi Ron, how are you?

Ron: What's this?

Sam: It's a class that I need to start taking.

Ron: I don't know about this Sam. I have to work this over.

Sam: Why? I really need to take the class.

Ron: Well, I have to check it out, to see how many other people are going already. You know we could have a problem if you are going because a lot of other people want to take the classes

Sam: I know that, I do need it, because I can't read, and that's the purpose.

Ron: You can't read.

Sam: No.

Ron: Maybe that's why I am having all these problems with you.

Sam: What do you mean?

Ron: I'll go over with Sue and she will get back to you on it.

Sam: How long will this take?

Ron: You will know at the end of the shift.

Sue: Hi Sam, can I talk to you for a minute?

Sam: Yes.

Sue: I want to talk to you about the class you want to take, Ron told me that you couldn't take it.

Sam: But why? I waited a long time for this.

Sue: What happens is, that a lot of people in the program want to take classes and only so many people can take it.

Sam: I really need that. I need to learn. I want to be able to read.

Sue: I want to talk to you about that.

Sam: What about that?

Sue: Don't tell people that you can't read.

Sam: Why not?

Sue: We get in trouble. You have to keep it quiet. If you have a problem come talk to me, I'll help you and particularly if you are working with the chemicals, because we want to make sure that the chemicals are labeled correctly.

Sam: I don't have any problems with the chemicals.

Sue: Well yeah, there were some problems with the chemicals and I caught it one time, but not the other time, so if you have a problem, just come and talk to me and don't tell anybody that you can't read.

Sam: So, Ron is going to fire me now?

Sue: Just be careful, all right? Just be careful and stop telling people that you can't read.

Sam: All right, all right.

Scene 3: Max and Sam in Max's apartment

Sam: Hello Max, I have bad news.

Max: Now what?

Sam: I am not going to be able to take the classes, they said that they were too many people before me, they sort of like gave that as an excuse.

Max: Yeah. Did anybody tell you something about school, you know that you are going to end up losing your job?

Sam: Why am I going to lose my job? Because I told Ron that I can't read?

Max: Because you could mess up. Now I can't work, I hurt my back.

Sam: But it's not fair.

Max: I know.

Sam: It's not my fault.

**Changes Project Stop Action Theater**

**"Don't take my children away!"**
**Theme: Welfare Reform**

Characters:

Tony . . . . . Welfare recipient
Sam:. . . . . Tony's friend
Candy. . . . . Welfare official
Sue: . . . . . Department of Social Services

Scene 1: Tony's apartment

Tony: Hi Sam!

Sam: How is it going?

Tony: I am okay.

Sam: So, what's happening, what you got here?

Tony: It's nothing.

Sam: You don't even open it, how you know it's nothing?

Tony: Put this away.

Sam: Come on!

Tony: I am telling you it is nothing.

Sam: This letter is from Welfare.

Tony: Let's talk about the children.

Sam: Wait a minute. Did you know you were supposed to be at the Welfare at 9:00 o'clock in the morning?

Tony: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Sam: Read this. Where are you supposed to meet them?

Tony: At the Welfare office.

Sam: It doesn't say that.

Tony: Oh, it says it there.

Sam: No it doesn't. What is the matter with you?

Tony: I'm telling you there is nothing wrong, what about the kids?

(The phone rang)

Tony: Hello.

Candy: Hello, Tony? This is Candy from Welfare. Did you know that you were supposed to be here this morning at 9:00? What happened?

Tony: Oh yeah, I just run into a situation, my baby-sitter just got here.

Candy: Oh I'm sorry, I need to see you because your time on welfare is up, and I need you to come in. Would you come right now?

Tony: Oh yeah, I'll be there.

Sam: Who was that?

Tony: My worker.

Sam: What did you mean your baby-sitter is here right now? I can't stay here.

Tony: I just got to talk to them.

Sam: When are you going to be back?

Tony: I'll be back soon.

Sam: What about food? There is no food here.

Tony: There is food in the house. Take the children and feed them, okay? I'll be back. Bye.

Scene 2: Welfare Office

Candy: You got here very quickly.

Tony: Yeah.

Candy: What have you been doing? Are you working?

Tony: No, I haven't found any work.

Candy: So you are doing volunteer jobs. But you haven't been putting in your hours.

Tony: I have worked my hours.

Candy: I have papers here that don't say anything about that, you are not making the 20 hours.

Tony: Yes, I am

Candy: I'm sorry, I have to inform you.

Tony: That's it? You are not dealing with me anymore? I know what I am doing. I need my benefits.

Candy: I did check double. You know that we are taking the benefits from you because the period is up and I have a concern about you, you have had a lot of opportunities to get out there and get a part time job.

Tony: How I am going to do that without reading? I need the reading.

Candy: I am doing my job, I can't teach you or tell you what to do, it is up to you.

Tony: I was doing fine when I was in school. Why don't you take the time from there?

Candy: I'm just doing my job. I just can't do that.

Tony: I can't read. Why can't you say something to them?

Candy: I'm sorry, it's too late.

Tony: What I am suppose to do. Can me and my children come and stay with you?

Candy: By the way you have a week.

Tony: A week for what?

Candy: For your case to be totally filled.

Tony: Totally filled? You mean totally closed.

Candy: Totally filled and closed. You have a week. If that week comes and you have not found a job, I am going to call Social Services, because they have to investigate and make sure that you are taking care of your children.

Tony: Why would you do that?

Candy: It's my job, I have to do it.

Tony: But why? You are not going to give the benefits anymore.

Candy: I'm sorry, I just do what I have to do.

Scene 3: Tony's apartment

Sam: Where have you been?

Tony: I have been at the Welfare office talking with my worker.

Sam: What happened?

Tony: They are going to zap me off!

Sam: What do you mean?

Tony: The people from that place where I do my 20 hours said I haven't been there.

Sam: Have you?

Tony: Yeah. Did the children eat?

(Somebody knocks at the door)

Sam: Who's that?

Tony: I don't know.

Sam: Yes they ate, but you need to get some foodstamps.

Sue: Hi, I am looking for Tony.

Sam: Come in.

Sue: Tony? Hi, I am Sue from Social Services; you have got my letters that I was coming to talk to you?

Tony: What letters?

Sue: Who are you?

Sam: A friend.

Tony: Mind your business.

Sue: We need to talk because Candy had told me about your situation.

Tony: She called you that soon?

Sue: Well yeah. As you know you have been notifed that your time on Welfare is up. Why haven't you gotten any job?

Tony: I have been doing the 20 hours.

Sue: So you don't have a job and you are going to be cut off from Welfare. I want to know what income are you going to have?

Tony: I will come up with something.

Sue: You will have some income. How?

Tony: I'll have some.

Sue: I think we should talk about your children and what's going to happen to them.

Tony: Please don't take my children.

**Changes Project Stop Action Theater**

**"I Can't Do Anything."**
**Theme: Immigration Reform**

Wife: Honey, I am so sorry. What are we going to do? We couldn't renew my tourist visa by going to Canada, and I am 4 months pregnant. I can't go back to Colombia because Immigration won't allow me to come back here and I don't want to have our baby without you. I don't want to stay in this country illegally. What are we going to do?

Husband: Don't worry, everything is going to be fine. Remember that I am a legal resident and we have rights.

Wife: I am not sure about that. Last week I heard something in the news that the law has changed, and that residents don't have the same rights as citizens. I am very scared. We don't have any information. We need to go to the Immigration Office so we can find out what to do.

(One month later)

Husband: Look, we just got a letter from Immigration saying that you were approved to change your status. Now we just have to fill out this application and pay this fee. I told you everything would be fine. Now relax, remember you are going to have a baby and you can't worry about this, okay?

(Two months later at the Immigration office in the waiting room)

Wife: Finally everything is done: Physical exam, pictures, forms, taxes... I can't believe we spent almost $300.00 for this application.

Husband: ...Yes, but after this you are going to have your social security card so you'll be able to study, work and achieve all your goals.

Officer: Number 25!

Husband: Good morning, we would like to change my wife's status from tourist to resident.

Officer: Can I see your passport?

Wife: Yes, sir here it is.

Officer: Ah, you were supposed to have left this country four months ago. Do you know you are breaking the law? You are not eligible to change your status.

Husband: But we sent in this application and it says...

Officer: I know what it says, but you are not eligible!

Wife: I am sorry, but it says here that I can apply because my husband is a legal resident and...

Officer: Are you listening to me? YOU ARE NOT ELIGIBLE!!!

Husband: Can you please explain to me why she is not eligible?

Officer: Look, she can't change her status because she overstayed. You have to be a citizen to be able to apply for her. She needs to go back to her country.

Husband: Can she apply for a work permit?

Officer: Do you understand what I am saying here? SHE IS NOT ELIGIBLE. First you have to become a citizen.

(At home talking to her husband)

Wife: I don't know what I am going to do. I went to the DMV to try to get a driver's license and they told I can't get a license without a social security number. I can't work, I can't study and I just got a call from Medicaid telling me I can't apply either. You applied for your citizenship eight months ago and we haven't heard anything yet. I feel very depressed. When I came to this country I had a lot of goals and dreams. But now I CAN'T DO ANYTHING!!!